

Rabin 'hopeful' of peace with Syria

BONN (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was quoted Sunday as saying he was optimistic his country could find peace with Syria. "The Syrians understand that Israel is ready to withdraw from the Golan Heights," he told Germany's Die Welt newspaper in an interview released ahead of publication Monday. "I also believe they are thinking in Damascus about how much sense it would really make for Syria to fall back into a war situation," he said. Mr. Rabin said Israel was ready to quit the Golan Heights if Damascus agreed to a bilateral peace treaty and to normalise relations with the Jewish state. He said Israel hoped to conclude a peace treaty with at least one Arab neighbour this year or at the latest next year. "If we don't this would result in frustration on all sides and lead to heightened tension in the region," he said. Mr. Rabin said he did not believe Israel's expulsion of 415 Palestinians to Lebanon would undermine chances of negotiations with Syria.



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Accord signed over Jordan-Gulf Bank

AMMAN (Petra) — A memorandum of understanding was signed Sunday between the Jordan Gulf Bank and a group of Jordanian and Arab investors. The memo aims to enable the bank, which has recently merged with the Al Mashreq Bank/Jordan, to continue its banking operations as usual. The memo was signed after consultations between the bank and the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) in accordance with decisions by the Economic Security Committee (ESC) on Al Mashreq and Jordan Gulf Banks. The decisions by the ESC aimed to restructure the bank's capital by creating a new capital of JD 20 million and to preserve the rights of the banks' clients.

Bomb threat on Air India plane

ANKARA (AP) — An Air India passenger jet made a brief emergency stop here Sunday after an anonymous caller said there was a bomb aboard, news agencies reported. Security forces searched the plane, travelling from New Delhi to London, during the five-hour stop but no bomb was found, an airport official said. Reports said an anonymous caller telephoned Air India's office in New Delhi and said there was a bomb aboard the flight. The information was radioed on to the pilot, Sonia Gandhi, widow of the late Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi, was reported to be among the passengers. Another said, New Delhi airport officials said they could not confirm the report.

Egypt lawyers, engineers strike

CAIRO (R) — Lawyers and engineers went on strike in Egypt Sunday in protest at a law likely to stop Muslim fundamentalists controlling their professional associations. The lawyers stayed out of court all day and the engineers stopped work for a few hours. Their associations said they would organise sit-ins and more strikes unless the law is repealed. The law, passed by parliament Wednesday and approved by President Hosni Mubarak the next day, will make it hard for fundamentalists to retain control of the associations. Under the law, elections inside the associations are invalid unless at least 50 per cent of the members vote. In many cases the fundamentalists have won control on very low turnouts.

Israel elects new chief rabbis

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel got new chief rabbis Sunday after an election campaign dubbed the dirtiest in Israeli history, with accusations of womanising, bribery and electronic snooping. A 150-member concave of religious and lay leaders met and elected Yisrael Lau and Eliahu Bakshi Doron as chief rabbis of the European-descended Ashkenazi and Middle East-descended Sephardi communities of Israel. They succeeded rabbis Avraham Shapira and Mordechai Eliahu.

Qadhafi warns of plot against popular rule

CAIRO (AP) — Libyan leader Moammar Qadhafi has expressed fears of a conspiracy against popular rule in Libya and warned that some people are trying to take power away from the people. Colonel Qadhafi, speaking by telephone to a seminar on consumerism shown on Libyan television Saturday night, spoke of pressure being applied to merge local districts. He said he fears that there might be a conspiracy against popular authority and the participation of the Libyan citizen in deciding his destiny in everything.

Budget

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Christopher vows U.S. will be 'honest broker'

Syria tables 'proposals' to end stalemate; U.S. secretary of state arrives in S. Arabia

Palestinians say judicial review no solution

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Sunday that Arab leaders were willing to resume peace talks with Israel and pledged that the United States would step in as an "honest broker" to revive the stalled negotiations. But he told a news conference after 3½ hours of talks with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad that he did not believe that the Clinton administration should "put pressure on any of the parties" to speed up the U.S.-sponsored process. Mr. Christopher did not elaborate, but he apparently was ruling out that the United States would lean on Israel, as the Arabs demanded, to bring home nearly 400 expelled Palestinians. The mass expulsion Dec. 17 has incensed the Arabs and threatened the tortuous peace process launched in Madrid in October 1991. The Palestinians say they will boycott the negotiations until all the expellees have been allowed home.

Syria has said it sees no point in resuming the talks broken off in mid-December until Israel backs down and takes the men back. Mr. Christopher, who later arrived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, said that his talks with Mr. Assad, a pivotal player in the peace process, were wide-ranging with a "candid and useful exchange of ideas." He said that Syria had "played, and will continue to play" a central role in the negotiations "and must do so if they are to be successful." Mr. Christopher said that he and Mr. Assad "spoke of the desirability of an early resumption... and the need for progress... frankly, I've been encouraged by our substantive discussions."

Mr. Christopher told the joint news conference with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaf "President Assad emphasised his commitment to the process of direct negotiations that were launched in Madrid and welcomed the U.S. role as a full partner in the process." Mr. Sharaf said Damascus put some proposals to Mr. Christopher to resolve the fate of the evictees, who have spent nine weeks in a makeshift camp between Israeli and Lebanese lines, so that peace talks can be resumed as soon as possible. He gave no details of the proposals but said: "The deportees issue has become like a thorn in resuming the peace talks and we have to remove this thorn." "We shall work together to have the peace talks resume in a convenient and admirable atmosphere."

Palestinian poll says no peace talks before exiles return home

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Four out of five Palestinians think their leaders should boycott Middle East peace talks until some 400 Palestinians expelled to Lebanon return; an opinion poll showed Sunday. A majority favoured the resumption of the U.S.-sponsored talks once the expulsion issue was resolved, according to the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, a Palestinian information agency. The poll of 1,190 Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip was published on the eve of a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher who is trying to revive the 16-month-old peace process. The findings highlight the acute political embarrassment Israel's Dec. 17 expulsion of 415 has caused Palestinian peace negotiators. The negotiators want to return to the Washington talks but cannot ignore public sympathy for the evictees. The expulsions touched a raw nerve for Palestinians, haunted by memories of expulsions and flight since the 1948 Middle East war. Jamil Rabah told a news conference his poll was the first to sample such a wide segment of Palestinians. It showed 83.7 per cent opposed a return to talks until the expulsion issue was settled. But 60.6 per cent favoured a resumption of talks after settlement compared with 35.4 per cent who opposed it. A bare majority, 50.7 per cent, thought the talks would yield some results but not meet all Palestinian needs. Nearly a third, 31.9 per cent, said the talks would never bring anything good for Palestinians. The sample showed a drop in support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) compared with polls in Arab newspapers. Asked who represented Palestinians 58.1 per cent said the PLO, 12.4 per cent the Islamic movement and 26.1 per cent said true representation could only be achieved through direct elections. Mr. Rabah said his poll, conducted throughout the occupied territories from Feb. 18 to 20, had a margin of error of five to six per cent.

Exiles ready for deal based on Israeli pledge

MARJ AL ZOHOOR, Lebanon (Agencies) — Palestinian exiles stranded in South Lebanon said Sunday they would accept a timetable for their repatriation if Israel made an internationally guaranteed pledge renouncing expulsion. The announcement by evictee spokesman Aziz Dweik suggested the nearly 400 exiles had softened their rigid rejection of a phased return. The development came on the third day of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's current Middle East tour (see separate story). "We will accept a timetable for our return only if Israel declares with international guarantees that it will not deport any Palestinian anymore," Dr. Dweik said. "Otherwise, it's all or none," added Dr. Dweik, a geography professor. The evictees are living in a makeshift camp between Lebanese and Israeli army lines. His statements suggested the exiles might accept a phased return over a period of time, as long as they got the no-expulsion pledge from Israel. Until now, they have been insisting that they all return together, and immediately. (Continued on page 5)

Amato reshuffles cabinet after bribery scandals

ROME (R) — Italian Prime Minister Giuliano Amato reshuffled three key cabinet posts Sunday as he struggled to keep his government afloat after a series of bribery scandals that has decimated the Italian political class. The reshuffle, after four hours of argument among ministers on how to prop up the eight-month-old government, was a rapid response to the turmoil created by the resignation of the finance and health ministers last Friday. Socialist Franco Reviglio, previously budget minister, was made finance minister, ministers said as they left a special cabinet meeting. Veteran Christian Democrat Beniamino Andreotta will take over Mr. Reviglio's old job. Liberal Raffaele Costa was promoted to the health ministry. He had previously been a minister without portfolio responsible for regional affairs. Mr. Amato hurried from his office to the nearby Quirinale Palace to present his plans to President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who later signed decrees approving the nominations. Mr. Amato has kept his word about halving the government back to full strength before the opening of financial markets Monday. Friday's resignation of Finance Minister Giovanni Goria and Health Minister Francesco de Lorenzo, both tainted by corruption scandals, hammered the lira on the foreign exchanges. The prime minister failed to broaden his four-party alliance as both the former communists of the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and the small Republican Party refused overtures to join an administration headed by him. The government is Italy's 51st since World War II and, like most before it, is based on an uneasy alliance between Christian Democrats and Socialists. It has a wafer-thin majority of just 16 in the 630-seat lower house but Mr. Amato is expected to call a fresh confidence vote in the next few days to prove he still has parliamentary approval. Mr. Amato's Socialist Party is the focus of an inquiry into the corrupt awarding of public works contracts centered on Milan. The scandal has forced former Prime Minister and strong Amato backer Bettino Craxi to resign as head of the party. It also cost Socialist Justice Minister Claudio Martelli his job less than two weeks ago. Separate scandals brought down Mr. Goria and Mr. De Lorenzo.

Prince Abdullah to wed Rania Yassin

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Royal Court Sunday announced the engagement of His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, the eldest son of His Majesty King Hussein, to Rania Faisal Yassin. The Royal Court said the engagement was attended by King Hussein, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad, the personal representative of King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan as well as Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal, Prince Hamzeh, Prince Hashem and

Prince Ghazi, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Chief Chamberlain Prince Raad Ben Zeid, Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef, and other Princes and Princesses and members of the Royal Family. It was also attended by the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, the chief of the Royal Court, the minister of Islamic affairs, the chief Islamic justice, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the chief of Royal Protocol, and other senior officials.



His Majesty King Hussein with His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah and his fiancée Rania Faisal Yassin who got engaged Sunday (photo by Meldos)

"As the Royal Court announces the happy news, it is honoured to send to His Majesty King Hussein and the Hashemite family and the Jordanian family its warmest congratulations," the statement said.

Jordan made stands clear on peace and Iraq to Christopher — Abu Jaber

Foreign minister to brief House in secret session

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament will Wednesday hold a secret session to discuss the outcome of talks Jordanian officials held with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who is currently touring the region in a bid to reactivate the stalemate Arab-Israeli peace process. The House decided to debate the matter in a closed-door session at the request of Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber, who Sunday briefed deputies on the visit. Dr. Abu Jaber told the House that His Majesty King Hussein pointed out in his talks with Mr. Christopher that the question of the Palestinian expellees was a major obstacle to the peace process, which has to be solved through allowing all expellees to return to the occupied territories.

Jordan also reiterated its position that unless a just solution to the Palestinian problem was found, the area would face devastating consequences and stability would never prevail, Dr. Abu Jaber said. During two days of talks with Mr. Christopher, Dr. Abu Jaber said, Jordan emphasised that the independence and territorial integrity of Iraq were essential for the stability and security of the region. Warning of tragic and dangerous consequences of measures threatening the sovereignty and integrity of Iraq, Dr. Abu Jaber said Jordan emphasised to Mr. Christopher the urgency of ending the suffering of the Iraqi people. Jordan also discussed with the American official the negative impact of the U.N.-imposed international sanctions against Iraq and the inspection of Aqaba-bound shipping on the Jordanian

economy, Dr. Abu Jaber said. In addition to expressing hope that the U.S. would reflect "the principles it calls for in its policies," Jordan reiterated its commitment to a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of land for peace, Dr. Abu Jaber said. Dr. Abu Jaber said Mr. Christopher reiterated the U.S. commitment to become a full partner in the peace process in order to contribute to the achievement of tangible progress in the negotiations, which has been suspected since Israel expelled about 400 Palestinians to Lebanon on Dec. 17. Mr. Christopher, according to Dr. Abu Jaber, said that the U.S.-Israeli agreement on the expellees would guarantee the return of 101 evictees and the re-

U.N. team to pay surprise visit to Iraq

MANAMA (R) — The United Nations Sunday announced a surprise weapons inspection visit to Iraq, and said experts would fly in at dawn Monday. "We have a certain operation ahead of us and we would not like to disclose it to the press," team leader Nikita Smidovitch told reporters Sunday night, nine hours before a U.N. plane was to head in to Baghdad. Mr. Smidovitch would not elaborate on the objectives of the visit or why it was mounted so suddenly. Another set of U.N. inspectors already in Baghdad has extended its stay beyond its originally planned departure date of Sunday, after telling the press that it had gathered fresh information on Iraq's ballistic missile programme.

Fragile Kabul truce collapses

KABUL (AP) — A fragile truce between the struggling Islamic government and fundamentalist rebels collapsed early Sunday, heightening fears of a renewed battle for the capital. Government artillery slammed into the western suburbs controlled by Hezb-e-Wahdat, an Iranian-supported coalition of eight small, predominantly Shiite factions. The fighting, which broke a week-long lull, apparently erupted when Hezb-e-Wahdat tried to overrun government posts, military sources said. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Many of the neighbourhoods under fire were destroyed and deserted months ago (see page 2). On the city's southern edge, weary government forces battled fighters of Hezb-e-Islami, an ally of Hezb-e-Wahdat. There were no signs of casualties, although the Defence Ministry said one of its troops was injured. The Muslim rebels who ousted Afghanistan communist regime in April have been fighting among themselves since, killing and wounding thousands of people — mostly civilians — and destroying much of the capital. The combatants had agreed to a temporary ceasefire last Sunday to give mediators a chance to broker peace. Afghanistan's most powerful warlord, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, urged the warring sides Sunday to allow him to negotiate a lasting ceasefire. He also called on Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia — who backed the rebels in their 14-year struggle against the communists — to accept the truce and stop providing weapons, money and encouragement to the warring factions. "It is heartbreaking for me and all Afghans to see our homeland being destroyed," Gen. Dostum said in a leaflet distributed around the city. "We must not allow foreign forces to use Afghanistan for their own interests. The time has come to settle our problems and differences through dialogue."

But the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani has become suspicious of Gen. Dostum, whose Uzbek militia helped oust the communists. Gen. Dostum's fighters helped the new government state off repeated attacks by Hezb-e-

Wahdat and the Hezb-e-Islami faction, led by rebel chief Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who wants to establish a strict Islamic order. But Gen. Dostum remained neutral in the month-long battle that began Jan. 19 when Hezb-e-Islami and Hezb-e-Wahdat joined to challenge Mr. Rabbani's government. They allege he was reelected through vote rigging. Hospitals say at least 1,000 people died and more than 6,000 were wounded before the temporary truce was called. That number could be higher, however, because few bodies are taken to hospitals. The renewed fighting between the government and Hezb-e-Wahdat raised fears that Mr. Hekmatyar's fighters might break the ceasefire and that Gen. Dostum might send his militia from northern Afghanistan to support them. Early Sunday, several government tanks raced towards Kabul's airport. Earlier this month, the government named Gen. Dostum deputy defence minister, hoping to woo him back in its camp. Gen. Dostum has yet to accept the offer.

Police mount massive manhunt after attack at Jabal Amman shop

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police mounted a massive manhunt late Sunday following the stabbing attack on the owner of a supermarket in the First Circle area of Jabal Amman. According to sources, police were called to the area after eyewitnesses phoned them to report a "fight" in the supermarket during which the owner of the shop was stabbed in the neck with a knife. The victim of the attack was treated and released from hospital Sunday. Sources said the wound was not serious. The assailant, said to be wearing a headress hiding his facial features, fled the scene and police were searching for him late into the night. "Policemen are everywhere,"

Garang says no talks

KAMPALA (R) — Sudanese rebel leader John Garang said he and the Sudanese government would not hold peace talks in the Ugandan capital Kampala. Ugandan officials said Saturday that peace talks would open Sunday when a government delegation led by Economic Planning Minister Ali Al Hajj Mohammad arrived from Khartoum. But Colonel Garang, leader of the main faction in the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), told Reuters in an interview in Kampala late Saturday. "We did not come to Kampala for peace talks since there is already an ongoing peace process. We have come to receive a (Continued on page 5)

Iraq says it will execute traders of banned goods

By Dilip Ganguly
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq said Sunday it would execute traders dealing in banned foreign consumer goods, a trade that is undermining the sanctions-battered economy.

"The Revolutionary Command Council has issued a decree which stipulates that those traders who store or sell commodities that are banned... shall be punished with the death penalty or life imprisonment," said the state-run newspaper Al Thawra.

In August, the government banned trade in luxury goods and compelled traders and retailers to clear them from their shops by Dec. 10.

The idea behind the government decision was to push traders into using their hard currency holdings for importing much needed food, instead of luxury goods.

The traders did clear their stores, but by shifting the goods to homes and warehouses. The imports of luxury goods and consumer goods continued and they are sold on the black market.

Sunday's decision is seen as an extreme measure to halt trading in luxury goods and save the Iraqi dinar from further decline.

The dollar traded at about 35 dinars Sunday in Baghdad's foreign exchange black market, where salesmen stand beside roads with huge plastic bags containing dollars. They flash a money symbol by using sign language at passing vehicles. Deals are made quickly.

The currency trading has the

government's covert support as this is one of the ways the state encourages trading in dollar holdings of Iraqis.

The official rate is \$3.20 to one dinar.

The prices of essential commodities — chicken, meat, flour and rice — have risen up to 50 per cent since December.

President Saddam Hussein had ordered an increase of about 40 per cent in salaries of civil servants and military personnel in December. But the rise did little to alleviate the suffering of the people as most of it was eaten up by the rising prices.

With its oil exports banned and all Iraqi assets abroad either frozen or seized, Iraq is finding it more and more difficult to redress its economy, which has been under U.N.-imposed sanctions since Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait.

Earlier government efforts to support the dinar and reduce prices have not had much success. Last July the government executed 42 traders accused of illegally hoarding and profiteering.

A rationing system, which provides almost two thirds of food needs, has so far kept the Iraqis at subsistence level.

In January the government ordered an increase in the monthly quota distributed through the ration system.

The increases include: Flour, from eight kilograms per person per month to nine kilograms; sugar, from 1.25 kilogramme to 1.50 kilogramme; and rice from 1.50 kilogramme to 1.75 kilogramme.

Rushdie appeals for meeting with Major

LONDON (R) — British author Salman Rushdie, sentenced to death by Iran for blasphemy, appealed publicly Sunday for a meeting with Prime Minister John Major.

Mr. Rushdie told British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Television he wanted an on-the-record meeting, which would be "a symbolic gesture but an important one."

The aim would be to show Iran that Britain was serious in opposing the death sentence on Mr. Rushdie, which Iranian leaders reconfirmed a week ago on the fourth anniversary of its imposition.

"Nothing will do that except the government standing next to me and saying: 'we will protect our citizens,'" Mr. Rushdie said.

The government has taken an increasingly high-profile stance against the death order in recent weeks.

Last Thursday Foreign Office Minister Douglas Hogg held a meeting with Iran's top diplomat in London at which he condemned the order as a violation of international law and an incitement to murder.

The death edict was imposed on Mr. Rushdie, 45, by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini for allegedly blaspheming against Islam in his novel "The Satanic Verses."

Iranian spokesmen have subsequently offered a bounty of more than \$1 million.

Mr. Rushdie is under 24-hour police protection but has in the past year made increasingly frequent surprise public appearances and trips abroad in a quest for international support.

He dismissed statements by Iranian leaders that the death order could never be lifted because that could only be done by the person who imposed it — Ayatollah Khomeini — and he is dead.

He noted that Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani had said the edict could be lifted for extreme national need. "This is not a technical or theological problem; it's a problem of political will," Mr. Rushdie said.

Mr. Rafsanjani has written to European states condemning their policy on the Rushdie affair and restating that the death order on the Iranian-born author will not be lifted, IRNA agency said Saturday.

The agency said President Rafsanjani's letter to the 12 European Community (EC) members also formed the basis of Thursday's meeting between Mr. Hogg and Iran's senior diplomat in London.

The seven-page letter accusing EC states of "double standards" in their condemnation of the Iranian death order could deal a blow to Iran's efforts to win Western investment.

Mr. Rafsanjani stressed in the letter that the death edict had been confirmed by different Muslim sects and the 51-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference. He "categorically stated there was no way in which it could be lifted," IRNA said.

IRNA said Mr. Hogg had also assured Iranian Charge d'Affaires Gholamreza Ansari that Mr. Major and his foreign secretary would give "a comprehensive, serious and indepth reply" to Mr. Rafsanjani's letter.

The Iranian president also dismissed what Tehran calls false Western claims that it was leading an arms race in the region.

"Despite all the false propaganda about (Iran), its defence budget was by far the lowest in the region, as is borne out by military sales analysts," IRNA reported.

Mr. Rafsanjani also stressed that Iran's human rights record was the best in the Middle East.

Aideed aide sees imperial designs in Somalia

MOGADISHU (R) — An aide to one of Somalia's most powerful warlords said Sunday that U.S. and other foreign troops had adopted a colonial-style policy of divide-and-rule because they had long-term imperial designs on the country.

Issa Mohammad Siad, an official in the political faction led by General Mohamed Farah Aided, said the multinational force had also failed to feed the people and was not even-handed in the way it had set about dismantling the Somali militias.

"We think they don't want a unified Somalia so they can remain here for a long time and take over our country and recolonise us. That's our suspicion. We will not allow it," Mr. Siad, the

head of foreign relations in Gen. Aided's wing of the United Somali Congress (USC), told Reuters in an interview.

Asked why anyone would want to take over an impoverished country such as Somalia, he said: "Somalia has huge reserves of both oil and gas and there are lots of people who would want to control these."

Oil and gas have not been found in Somalia but geological data indicate that deposits should exist.

Farouk Mawlawi, the U.N. spokesman in Somalia, rejected Mr. Siad's charges. "All we are trying to do is to facilitate reconciliation among the Somali factions. We have been very careful not to enter into any inter-fac-

tional disputes."

The United Nations has called a meeting of 15 factions Tuesday in Mogadishu. An all-party panel will try to settle disputes between them and persuade them to observe a truce they signed last month but have frequently ignored.

U.S. officials said the outburst by Mr. Siad indicated support for Gen. Aided's faction was waning now that the multinational force has ordered militiamen into assembly points as part of the disarmament process.

"Without the gun pointed at people, several warlords are finding that political support is shifting away from them. They are obviously concerned," one senior official said.

"UNITAF is also concerned mostly in areas controlled by the party. Why not the whole country? It is UNITAF's responsibility to disarm Morgan's band," he added.

Mr. Siad also complained that the task force had brought guns from food to Somalia and that thousands of people were still dying in the eastern regions of Somalia.

"It is not necessary to spend this money to send this UNITAF contingent. We already have enough guns and arms in our country and it is not necessary to add to them."

"I am sure that most of the bandits... would throw away their guns if they could be assured one or two meals a day."

Accused Egyptians say they killed Swedish woman

CAIRO (Agencies) — Three men arrested in connection with the murder of a U.S. tourist confessed to killing a Swedish woman diving instructor, security sources said Sunday.

They said the men arrested last week confessed during interrogation about the murder of the American woman. The Swede was killed six months ago and her body dumped in the Red Sea at the resort of Sharm Al Sheikh.

The trio collected the Swede on her arrival at Cairo Airport to take her to a Red Sea Hotel. They stole her scuba equipment and money then strangled her.

Her body was found on Sept. 10. Her diving equipment was found among the suspects' possessions, the sources added.

The three men were named as Jamal Abdullah, a former employee of a tourist company at Cairo Airport, Sayed Toghiani, a driver, and Yousef Mohammad Youssef, unemployed.

They used the same tactic with the 65-year-old American from Miami. They picked her up at the airport and killed her on the way to an hotel, the sources said. Her body was found on Feb. 6 on a road between Cairo and Suez.

The U.S. and Swedish consulates have declined to identify the women or give further details.

Gunsman attack shop
Four masked gunmen bran-

Economist launches Egypt group for democracy

CAIRO (R) — One of Egypt's most distinguished economists has launched a pressure group calling for faster economic reform and greater democracy.

"It has become clear that democracy and human rights are not something separate from development but are just as essential as economic factors," said Al Naggar told an invited audience of several hundred prominent business managers, lawyers, and academics.

He praised President Hosni Mubarak for allowing freedom of expression but said this was not enough.

"We are in urgent need of political reform to strengthen constitutional bodies, support popular participation, achieve balance of powers, protect human rights... guarantee good government and ensure the independence of the judiciary and the media," Mr. Naggar declared.

The foundation of the group, New Civic Forum, marks an ambitious attempt by leaders of Egypt's liberal establishment to assert their values at a time when the government is wrestling with economic reform and struggling to control Islamic fundamentalist opposition.

Mr. Naggar, a Cairo University professor who served for many years in United Nations organisations and the World Bank, said New Civic Forum was not a poli-

tical party.

But this was the first question he was asked by his audience Saturday night. It ranged from the former editor of the pro-government newspaper Al-Ahram, Mohammed Heikal, to the spokesman of the banned Muslim Brotherhood, Maamoun Hodeibi.

Mr. Naggar said "political Islam" was one of the great challenges facing Egypt in the 1990s but was careful to suggest dialogue rather than confrontation with the movement that is the most powerful opposition force in Egyptian politics.

He urged the movement to go beyond its general slogan "Islam is the solution" to explain in detail the policies it favoured. "This slogan can be interpreted in different ways. These interpretations could include a 'traditionalist' position which is incompatible with the needs of economic progress and basic human rights."

"But this slogan could also contain an enlightened interpretation in accordance with the needs of our time," Mr. Naggar said.

Mr. Naggar urged the government to speed up its economic reforms, saying a growth rate of twice the five per cent officially forecast was needed if Egypt was to conquer its vast unemployment problem.



RUINS OF WAR: Afghan children sit in front of rocket barrage launched by dissident Mujahideen factions opposed to the government in the past week Sunday. Dozens of houses were demolished in a

Kabulis live in terror 10 months after 'liberation'

By Suzy Price
Reuters

KABUL — Several hundred people, many dazed and sobbing, huddled in a mosque in a suburb of the Afghan capital, fugitives from months of bloody battles.

They are the victims of rival ambitions among the Mujahideen who fought for 14 years to free them from communist rule.

The alliance, between the Mujahideen parties unravelled after they took over from the former communist government last April and centuries-old hatreds and prejudices resurfaced.

The fugitives, mainly cold and frightened women and children, crouch on the bare floor of the Timony Mosque in a northeastern suburb of Kabul far from the southwestern districts where government troops fight a former ally, the Shiite Hezb-e-Wahdat party.

Most of the 150 families who have sought refuge in the mosque are Hazaras, Shiite Muslims who originate from Hazarajat in the centre and west of the country and live in communities in the west of Kabul.

"We are just ordinary people, we have no links with any group," said Mohammad Aboin. "Before there were no differences between Pashtun and Hazara, we were all brothers but now this fighting has ruined everything."

Much of the fighting of the last four weeks has been concentrated in the western suburbs around the headquarters of the Hezb-e-Wahdat at Kabul's Social Sciences Institute.

The Shiite are demanding a larger share in the government of Afghanistan, traditionally dominated by majority Pashtuns.

Troops loyal to the Islamic government of President Barhamuddin Rabbani and his newest ally Abdurrahman Sayyaf, fundamentalist Sunni Muslim leader of the Ittihad-e-Islami party have made advances against several of the Shiite bases.

"Four rockets hit our house and my 13-year-old son was killed," said one middle-aged woman, Rubarbah, as she wept quietly in a corner of the Timony Mosque.

"We escaped and carried our injured and our bodies here," she said. She arrived two days earlier. Beside her on the stone floor lay a nephew, his head and one eye in bandages.

Mohammad Zaman, who has taken charge of the refugees in the mosque, said 20 bodies of those killed in rocket attacks or who had died on the journey, had been buried in its grounds.

"Government soldiers looted our house and took all we had," said another Hazara woman. "We just had to escape."

One elderly woman knelt on the floor beating the ground with her fists. "The government shot dead my two sons," she wept.

A young girl of about 20 with a baby at her breast said her husband had been killed. "I didn't know where to go so I just came here. What will happen to me now?"

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) says hundreds of civilians have been killed and 5,000 injured in the latest fierce exchanges of rocket and artillery fire. The exact death toll

is not known since few bodies are taken to hospitals.

Almost immediately after the Mujahideen entered Kabul last April, the western suburbs became a battleground between the Hezb-e-Wahdat and its hardline Ittihad-e-Islami foes, who are from the majority Pashtun tribe.

Residents from the Pashtun community and their Shiite neighbours traded charges of kidnappings, rapes and atrocities while their fighters bombarded each other with rockets and artillery.

Refugees from the fighting tell of mutilated bodies found with their fingers chopped off or eyes gouged out. Each tribe blames the other.

One Pashtun reporter described how she was snatched off the street by a group of Hezb-e-Wahdat fighters who accused her of being a government spy and threatened to rape her and send her back to her people so that she could tell them of the fate in store for Pashtuns.

"A rocket fell nearby before they could do anything and I ran away," she said. She escaped, dodging a hail of bullets from her captors.

Fugitives fleeing the battlefield to the western suburbs tell of increasing incidence of rape and summary executions by fighters of all sides. The ferocity of the fighting prevents verification by independent observers.

However, the ragged women and children sobbing in the Timony Mosque are testimony to the mounting lawlessness and violence among guerrillas who entered the city 10 months ago as liberators on a wave of Islamic fervour.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Empires
19:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine Sport
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Step by Step
21:10 Martin Bay
22:00 News in English
22:30 Jordan Weekly
23:00 Vietnam

PRAYER TIMES

06:51 Fajr
06:58 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:40 Dhuhr
15:01 'Asr
17:31 Maghrib
18:48 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish,
Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel.
637785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terzian Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
623541.

Anglican Church Tel. 62826, Tel.
628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.
773261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Assuan International Church Tel.
685326.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel.
624328.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-
Day Saints Tel. 823824, 649632.
Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of
Meteorology.

It will be fair with some clouds
appearing at various altitudes. Winds
will be southeasterly moderate. In
Aqaba, winds will be northerly moder-
ate and sea calm.

USEFUL TELEPHONE

NIGHT DUTY

AMBULANCE:
Dr. Rafeq Zeinoun 888645
Dr. Nidal Al Dabbas 627195
Dr. Mohamed Al Ajjam 894184
Dr. Khalil Al Jabali 740740
First pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 635025
Nasrallah pharmacy 625672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shweini pharmacy 637660
Nasrallah pharmacy 625672
Najib pharmacy 947632

YERREB:
Dr. Jamel Ahmad 248688
Alqada pharmacy (-)

ZARQA:
Dr. Rafeq Atallah 984424
Khatib pharmacy 985417

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

USEFUL TELEPHONE

NIGHT DUTY

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Dr. Jamel Ahmad 248688
Alqada pharmacy (-)

ZARQA:
Dr. Rafeq Atallah 984424
Khatib pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 611111
Civil Defence Emergency 630341
Rescue 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 945402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 60221
Hotel Complaints 635880
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 787111
Ambulance Municipality 787111
Telephone Information (Directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Abdel Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power 626381
RJ Flight Information 06-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 06-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 81361232
Khafif Maternity, J. Amn. 642241/6
Al-Khif Maternity, J. Amn. 642241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mallat, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Swedish 669131
University Hospital 845445
Al-Musharraf Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Al-Muhammadiyah 771010
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674135
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 097983323

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal
Jordanian (RJ) Information depart-
ment at the Queen Alia International
Airport Tel. (06)53200-5, where it
should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:15 Samsa (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:30 Jeddah (RJ)
06:45 Cairo, Aqaba (RJ)
06:55 Riyadh (RJ)
07:05 Damascus (RJ)
07:15 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
07:25 New Delhi (RJ)
07:35 Beirut (RJ)
07:45 Bangkok (RJ)
07:55 Colombo, Thim (RJ)
08:05 London (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

07:30 Aden (AL)
07:45 Cairo (MS)
07:55 Khartoum (SU)
08:05 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
08:15 Vienna, Larnaca (OS)
08:25 Doha, Damascus (EM)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
06:30 London (RJ)
06:45 Toronto Montreal (RJ)
06:55 London (RJ)
07:05 Frankfurt (RJ)
07:15 Cairo (RJ)
07:25 Doha, Karachi (RJ)
07:35 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
07:45 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:15 Aden (AL)
06:30 Cairo (MS)
06:45 Khartoum (SU)
06:55 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
07:05 Vienna, Larnaca (OS)
07:15 Doha, Damascus (EM)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in file per kg

Apples 700 / 550
Bananas 700 / 550
Banana (Meknesser) 640 / 480
Beans 1200 / 950
Cabbage 100 / 500
Carrot 100 / 250
Cauliflower 800 / 120
Cucumbers (large) 200 / 150
Cucumbers (small) 450 / 350
Eggplant 320 / 250
Garlic 800 / 650
Grapefruit 450 / 350
Lemon 200 / 150
Marrow (large) 600 / 500
Marrow (small) 600 / 500
Mint 200 / 150
Onion (dry) 250 / 150
Onion (green) 250 / 150
Orange 600 / 500
Pepper (hot) 600 / 500
Pepper (sweet) 600 / 500
Potato 250 / 150
Spinach 100 / 50

هنا في الأردن

King meets with visiting Bulgarian deputy premier

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday received at the Royal Court Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister and Trade Minister Valentin Karbachev who arrived in Amman Friday on a five-day visit to Jordan. King Hussein and Mr. Karbachev stressed the need to enhance Jordanian-Bulgarian cooperation in various fields. The meeting was attended by Supply Minister Mohammad Al Saqqaf and the Bulgarian ambassador to Jordan.

In talks with Minister of Finance Basil Jaraneh, Mr. Karbachev urged Jordan to help activate the joint Jordanian-Bulgarian Economic Committee and increase the volume of trade between the two countries.

He proposed that Bulgaria and Jordan sign two agreements: One on preventing dual taxation, and the other on protecting joint investments.

He added that his country could benefit from the Jordanian free zones in marketing products in Middle Eastern countries and suggested that the Jordanian and Bulgarian private sectors launch joint economic ventures that trade attaches be appointed at the Bulgarian and Jordanian embassies in Amman and Sofia.

Mr. Jaraneh said the Jordanian government will study the Bulgarian proposals.

In talks later with Minister of Agriculture Fayez Khasawneh, the Bulgarian deputy premier said arrangements have been made for Bulgarian refrigerated trucks to deliver fresh meat to Jordan and return with shipments of Jordanian tomatoes during the winter.

He added that his country was determined to increase its trade with Jordan.



His Majesty King Hussein Sunday meets Bulgarian Deputy Premier Valentin Karbachev (Petra photo)

Sharif Zeid visits north

RAMTHA (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Sunday inspected the northern regions of the country. He visited the border post near the Syrian border and the construction sites along the Amman-Jerash-Irbid Highway.

Sharif Zeid listened to a briefing by Minister of Public Works and Housing Saad Srour on the construction stages of the Al-Jaber border post near Ramtha and later made a tour of that site.

The prime minister visited the second and third sections of the road linking Amman with Irbid and was briefed on the difficulties that impeded the progress of construction. A series of landslides were largely responsible for the delay; the project was to be completed last year.

Group reiterates demand to regain control of Arab Orthodox Church affairs

By Ella Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Chairman of the Arab Orthodox Society and President of the Orthodox Central Council for Jordan and Palestine Raouf Abu Jaber announced that the Arab Orthodox community was determined to follow in the footsteps of its predecessors in establishing and exercising their rights and protecting their interests despite the present Greek clergy's "hegemony."

At a lecture he delivered in Amman, Dr. Abu Jaber reiterated demands made at the conclusion of the Fifth Orthodox Congress held in Amman last December. "We are determined to regain our rights usurped by the Greek clergy that has been abusing the trust, mis-handling Arab Orthodox real estate, neglecting the interests of the Arab Orthodox community and its institutions and controlling the destiny of the Arab Orthodox Church clergy members on the two sides of the River Jordan," said Dr. Abu Jaber.

In his 11-page lecture at the Orthodox Club, Dr. Abu Jaber reviewed the historical and theological review of historical events in the Middle East and Jordan since the early Islamic and Byzantine periods.

Providing historical facts about

the Orthodox church which he said was under the control of Arab patriarchs throughout historical eras, Dr. Abu Jaber noted that it was an Arab patriarch who concluded "the famous Omari Pact" with Caliph Omar in Jerusalem in 636 AD, when he handed the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, thus reaffirming long standing cooperation between Christians and Muslims.

The lecturer said under Ottoman rule, Greece, as well as other European and Arab states, formed one empire, ruled by the Sultan in Constantinople; and it was under the rule of Sultan Mohammad the Second that the Greek clergy were further empowered to handle religious affairs in Palestine for purely political reasons.

"The Ottomans thus opened the door wide for the Greeks to impose their hegemony on Arab Orthodox churches until the late 1890s, and the early 20th century when a real awakening started to emerge, with political and religious leaders struggling to throw off both the Ottoman rule and the Greek hegemony over church affairs," according to Dr. Abu Jaber.

What the Arab Orthodox community is demanding, he said, is legitimate and in line with pledges given by the present Patriarch Deodorus of Jerusalem at his inauguration in 1981.

"The Patriarch made pledges which he had not kept, including a promise to halt all selling or leasing of property to the Israelis, improving Arab church's status spiritually and materially, opening the door for Arab clergy to reach senior church positions, giving due care to Orthodox schools, etc.," noted Dr. Abu Jaber.

He said the Arab Orthodox community continues to demand control of its own affairs because, he said, no Arab priest has been allowed, since the time of the Ottomans, to reach a high position, although the Greeks sometimes resorted to temporary compromise solutions to appease the Arabs.

Dr. Abu Jaber, who presented the Orthodox community's demands to the Fifth Orthodox Congress last December, reiterated to his audience the main objectives of the Arab community's struggle. These included:

— seeking to safeguard Arab national rights and Orthodox community estates, similar to endeavours being spearheaded by Roman Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem Michael Sabbah and the heads of the Protestant churches;

— halting deals by which Israel was allowed to take hold of lands, like the Orthodox cemetery in Jaffa, the lands around the St. John Monastery, among others; giving due attention to the affairs of the churches in Palestine and Jordan, many of these estates are in dilapidated condition due to years of neglect, like those in Zababdeh in the West Bank and Madaba church and estates at Taj and Hashimi districts in Amman;

— securing appropriate attention to the Arab Orthodox clergy, offering them the chance to acquire higher standards of learning to assume leading positions in the church;

— ensuring due care to the Orthodox schools which since 1872 have been in poor condition under the Greeks; and assuming the leadership of the Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

To date, the Greeks have failed in providing protection to church estates and Arab rights under the occupation, and even refused to involve Arab clergy in the church council activities, Dr. Abu Jaber maintained.

He stressed that the Orthodox community in the two banks is 200,000 strong and can by no means continue to allow Greek clergy to handle their destiny in such a shameful manner.

Party publications receive licences based on provisional formula — Sharif

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Political parties are being issued licences for their newspapers under interim arrangements pending parliamentary approval and enactment of the new law on press and publications, officials say.

Lower House of Parliament Deputy Suleiman Arar's Al Mustakbal Party was the first to receive a licence, followed by the Al Abd Party of former Ambassador to the U.S. and Security Chief Abdul Hadi Al Majali.

The Jordan Communist Party, of Yacoub Zayadin and the Jordan Democratic Popular Union Party of Azmi Khawaja have filed applications with the Ministry of Information, officials said.

Minister of Information Mahmoud Al Sharif noted that Article 17 of the Political Parties Law entitles every registered political group to have its own publication. But the 1973 Press and Publications Law does not provide for licences based on such a consideration, he pointed out.

Therefore, he told the Jordan Times, "we are using a compromise formula which allows licences to be issued to individuals" pending the finalisation and adoption of the draft press and publications law which is now under debate in

the Upper House of Parliament. The 1973 law provides for licences to be issued to four distinct categories: A journalist who is a member of the Jordan Press Association (JPA), a university graduate, a company dedicated to journalistic activities or a news agency.

Issa Jambani, head of the Press and Publications Department of the Ministry of Information, said the licences for political party publications were issued to the secretary-general of the concerned party on the basis that the licensee is a university graduate.

"The clear understanding is that the publication will be dedicated to the party" once the press law comes into force, Mr. Jambani told the Jordan Times.

The arrangement will be valid until the formal enactment of the new law on press and publications, and the publications would have to make the necessary changes to make them compatible with the new regulations.

Mr. Sharif said the Council of Ministers had the final say in granting licences for political publications on a case-by-case basis, in line with recommendations of the Ministry of Information.

Foreign-licensed publications of Jordanians — such as the Al Ahami of the Jordan People's Democratic Party, and Al Ribat



Mahmoud Al Sharif

of the Muslim Brotherhood and others — have to go through the same procedures, he said. There cannot be an automatic switch over of such publications to a Jordanian licence, he explained.

Regardless of who owns, edits or publishes, all foreign-licensed publications are subject to censorship before approval for entry to the Kingdom. Locally-licensed publications are not subject to any form of censorship.

While the door is open for daily newspapers, the licences sought by and issued to Al Mustakbal and Al Ahd, as well as the applications filed by Dr. Zayadin and Mr. Khawaja, are for weekly publications, Mr. Jambani said.

"It is up to the applicants to decide what to apply for," he said. "There are no objections to daily newspapers, but no one has so far sought a licence for a daily."

Many journalists and businessmen in the publishing industry believe that the main dissuading factor for seeking licences for dailies is that there is little room for another daily publication in Jordan.

Spokesmen for other parties said they were finalising the submission of applications to the Ministry of Information. There was no clear indication how many of the 16 political parties registered with the Ministry of Interior since Sept. 1 would seek licences for publications.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Information is also open for licences for "specialised" publications, Mr. Sharif said.

The main criteria for such licences, the minister said, were that the publication should be non-political in nature and be dedicated to certain sectors of social and economic life such as fashion, sports, tourism, computers etc.

Although applications for political publications are to be referred to the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Information is empowered to license "specialised" non-political publications.

TCC bent on enforcing late payment policy

AMMAN (Petra) — The Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) says it is determined to enforce its recently adopted policy of demanding, that telephone bills be paid monthly by subscribers and will not accept public protests of the policy because it has started to bear fruit.

Director of the TCC's Finance Department Adel Shamaleh Sunday said in a statement the TCC will continue to partially suspend telephone services should subscribers fail to settle their accounts within 15 days of receiving their bills, but would also suspend service altogether if response for payment was not forthcoming beyond the 15 days.

The last time the TCC took such action was on Feb. 1 when services to 8,300 subscribers were suspended compared with 30,000

the previous month, he said.

This means that the public has started to respond favourably to the TCC's rules in order to avoid any inconvenience, he added.

Within two weeks, the TCC plans to bill subscribers; they can call at the TCC auditors to verify the charges before payment, Mr. Shamaleh said.

He said the public would do well to open accounts in local banks and transfer the bills to these accounts so that a deduction, in payment of the telephone bills, can be automatic and save the subscriber any inconvenience.

The TCC is acting in line with regulations in order to ensure prompt collection of payments to meet its mounting commitments and carry out expansion projects, Mr. Shamaleh said.

AYF to launch 8-point plan to develop youth sector

AMMAN (Petra) — The Arab Youth Forum (AYF) Sunday held its second General Conference in Amman and announced an eight-point programme to contribute to the development of the youth sector in Jordan.

The opening session was addressed by Abdullah Kanaan who represented His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. He urged forum members to follow in the footsteps of the Hashemite leaders who, he said, have built the country and continue to pursue its progress by implementing the principles of the Great Arab Revolt.

Minister of Youth Saleh Issaheidat also addressed the session and outlined the various activities being conducted by the ministry.

Director General of the Jordan Cooperative Organisation Jamal Al Bedour reviewed plans involving the youth sector in socio-

economic development and co-operatives work.

AYF Deputy Chairman Sahban Kheifati said in a speech the forum has 19 branches around the country, adding that its members are constantly involved in lectures or seminars and have recently participated in providing medical services to 4,000 people in the rural areas.

The eight-point programme put before the conference entails conducting the following activities:

- finding work for unemployed AYF members through the creation of income-generating projects;
- involving AYF's members in agricultural projects to be carried out on state-owned land leased to the forum;
- involving the members in constructing hostels for travelling youth;

Attacker faces trial for attempted murder of child

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A six-year-old girl brutalised by a youth in front of a mosque outside Amman 11 days ago remained in a coma Sunday, and police have rejected the assailant's plea of mental de-
tachment and are planning to try him for attempted murder.

Rana Al Azzeh, the eldest daughter of Mohammad Al Azzeh, was sitting in her father's car along with her four-year-old brother and two-year-old sister outside a mosque in Russeifa on Feb. 12, when the attack occurred, according to family sources.

"They were waiting for their father, a Ministry of Education employee, to come out of the mosque after Friday prayers when the assailant, identified as A.T.H., a resident of Wihdat, approached them, said Salameh Al Azzeh, their grandfather.

According to other sources, the assailant, described as a "youth" in police reports, was asked to leave the mosque when he interrupted the sermons which follow Friday prayers. "He was shouting at the preacher and abusing him, and other worshippers threw him out of the mosque," said one source.

The youth came out of the mosque, and "pulled the elder girl and the boy, Murad, out of the car and started beating them and banging their heads against the wall," said the elderly Azzeh, quoting eyewitnesses.

"The boy collapsed and fell down, and the man kept on banging the girl's head," he told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview from the hospital room where the girl is under intensive care.

A few minutes later the assailant, a car mechanic, left the scene leaving the two victims

bleeding on the ground. He was arrested immediately by police who were alerted by witnesses, the grandfather of the children said.

Both children were immediately admitted to hospital. The boy was released after treatment shortly thereafter. The girl has yet to regain consciousness and her condition remains serious.

"Murad was relatively lucky to escape with injuries, but Rana has suffered serious brain damage," said Mr. Azzeh. "Her condition has not changed since she was hospitalised in an unconscious state."

According to local reports, the assailant pleaded to police that "a genie" had urged him to attack the children. The reports said police had discounted this argument — which implies mental derangement leading to the accused being judged not responsible for his behaviour — and that

the assailant would be tried at the Russeifa court.

The charge is expected to be attempted murder.

It was not immediately clear whether the youth had any previous record of similar behaviour, but some members of the Azzeh family said they had inquired about him in Wihdat and were told that he had a history of violence.

There was no explanation to the presence of the youth at a mosque in Russeifa, away from his residence in Wihdat. Azzeh family members said the family of the assailant was from Burin in the occupied West Bank, but that there was no family quarrel which could perhaps explain the attack.

"We don't know the man. We hadn't even heard of him," said the grandfather of the children. "Why did he do such a thing to my children?" he sobbed over the phone.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

King sends congratulatory cable to Qatari emir

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday sent a cable to the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Khalifah Ben Hamad Al Thani, congratulating him in his name and on behalf of the Jordanian government and people on the anniversary of his accession to the throne. King Hussein wished Sheikh Khalifah continued good health and happiness and the Qatari people further progress and prosperity.

Crown Prince, Princess Sarvath return to Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath were welcomed home Sunday by His Majesty King Hussein and other dignitaries following their tour of France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Ministry to distribute canned food during Ramadan

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Social Development plans to distribute 60,000 cans of food to needy families during the Holy Month of Ramadan, according to Minister Amin Mashaqbeh. Dr. Mashaqbeh said last week the ministry distributed 100,000 cans of vegetables in different regions.

Jordanian travel agent honoured

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Tourism Sunday honoured a local travel agent for his distinguished efforts to promote the tourism industry in Jordan. Mr. Mohammad Hijazi, the director of the Nahas Travel and Tourist Agency, arranged the first trip by group of Japanese tourists to Jordan. A special ceremony was held at the office of Minister of Tourism Yanal Hikmat where Mr. Hijazi was presented with a meritorious award.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

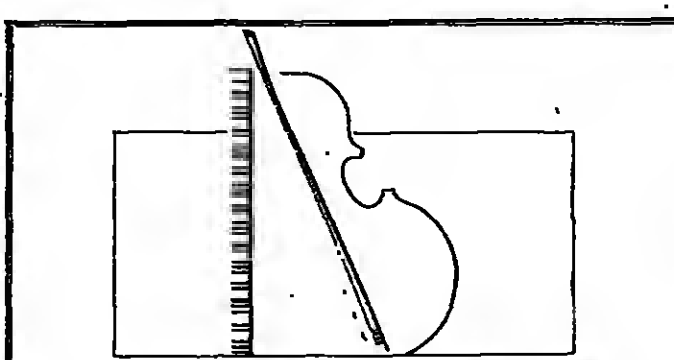
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by four Arab artists from the United States — Ghada Jamal, Helen Khal, Suha Nour and Ahd Zarayk — at the Abdel Hameed Shoman Foundation Gallery in Jabal Amman, between the First and Second Circles (10 a.m. - 6 p.m.)

- ★ Exhibition of oil paintings by Iraqi artist Mohammad Fakher at Baladina Art Gallery.

- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Iraqi artists Mohammad Fadhil and Jaber Mejbel at Alia Art Gallery.

FILM

- ★ French film entitled "La Vie de Famille" at the French Cultural Centre at 8 p.m. (1984, 98 min.)



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and

Ottal Haddad

in a violin and piano recital

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- Babush, tel. 661322
- Rihana Stores, tel. 693775
- Philadelphia Hotel, tel. 663100
- The National Music Conservatory, tel. 687620



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We are located in Jabal Amman, Fifth Circle, 168 first floor, near Arab Bank branch.

So, Little Known, So Much to Know

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.
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Jordan Times advertising department.

Weekly Political Pulse

Increased Palestinian assertiveness calls for cool assessment

In retrospect, the Palestinian side, ever since the incumbent Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin ascended to power, has chosen to exert more pressure on Israel. This added pressure was demonstrated by the increase in the tempo of the intifada and its escalation into an armed conflict where more and more Israeli soldiers are being ambushed and killed. The Israeli scale of oppression against the Palestinians is likewise increasing, culminating in an unprecedented high rate of death among the Palestinian youth.

The repeated threats to abandon the peace process, whether in its bilateral or multilateral forms, because of lack of progress or on account of the expulsion of more than 400 Palestinians to southern Lebanon manifests an increase in Palestinian assertiveness ever since the Israeli Labour-led government was formed in 1992. This additional Palestinian self-confidence and aggressiveness towards Rabin's government can be explained on three fundamental grounds: one is the long-standing Arab and Palestinian conception that in the final analysis there is no difference between Labour and Likud when it comes to the Palestinian case and the broader Arab-Israeli conflicts. Second is the overall Palestinian perception that Rabin could be more vulnerable to Arab and Palestinian pressures than the Likud. Last, there is a growing belief in the Arab camp that in the post Gulf war era U.N. Security Council resolutions have acquired a new sense of urgency and respect that makes them sacrosanct and more likely to be enforceable than ever before.

Armed with a multitude of U.N. resolutions that clearly lend support to the Arab posture on the Arab-Israeli conflicts, including the Palestinian dimension, the Arab side appears to have acquired a new sense of self-confidence hitherto absent in the search for a permanent settlement to the main Middle East conflict.

The overwhelming concern is whether this developing Palestinian stance runs the risk of aborting the so-called "last window of opportunity" to resolve the entire range of Arab-Israeli disputes. The worst-case scenario that can be contemplated in this vein is the collapse of the peace negotiating process and the demise of Rabin's Labour-led government in its aftermath.

In the complex equation of the Arab-Israeli peace parleys, there are many existing variables, one of which is the absolute certainty that any halt to the peace process would effectively be interpreted in Israel as tantamount to the bankruptcy of Rabin's policy. Should push come to shove, the Israeli Labour government would most certainly lose power. This would bring the Likud back into government and what would follow could irreversibly jeopardise the serious efforts to settle the Palestinian question and put it on the back burner for some decades.

According to this scenario, the Arab side, especially the Palestinians, may need to reassess its tactics and manoeuvres lest it should end up empty handed. For starters, in spite of the past record of the Labour Party on the Palestinian conflict and the previous performances of Rabin himself, there is little doubt that there is a fundamental difference between Labour and Likud regarding the peace process. One has to be blind not to discern this difference. For one thing, Labourists at least entertain the concept of land for peace on the basis of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, whereas Likudniks view the West Bank and Gaza Strip as lands of Israel over which they will never relinquish sovereignty. Second, the Labour constituency in Israel appears to be moving closer than ever to recognising the mainstream PLO as a full partner in the peace talks and has taken effective steps in that direction already, among which is the rescinding of the 1986 law that banned any contacts with the PLO. Third, the new Labour thinking in Israel has effectively taken a strategic decision

to maintain Israel as a strictly Jewish state that would not permanently govern Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

To be sure, the Rabin government is not poised yet to satisfy instantly all the legitimate Palestinian national aspirations and goals. For example, it refuses to commit itself to the prime issue of ultimate Palestinian independence. Yet, this refusal to yield to a legitimate Palestinian demand many not be foreclosed for all times but could be contingent on future developments in the region. On balance, therefore, Rabin's government offers some grounds for optimism for the Palestinian party whereas any Likud government that would come on the heels of the collapse of the Labour led government would not.

Yet this is not and could not be the total outlook of the situation. Unfortunately, there is not a single country in the entire world which has earned its freedom and independence without an armed struggle that paralysed Israel's political manoeuvring. The Palestinians cannot be expected to be the first who would shun the use of arms to attain their political aims. Israel, under any regime, cannot be so naive as to anticipate a strictly passive Palestinian resistance to occupation.

Where the Palestinian armed struggle could go terribly wrong is when innocent people get killed in a manner that runs counter to Islamic humanitarian law governing armed conflict. It so happens that Islam has introduced the most humane principles on the conduct of warfare, according to which not a child, woman, old man or innocent human being may be killed. The Islamic guidelines on waging an armed struggle is so progressive, and humane as to even exclude the destruction of trees and animals in wars. This is where the Arab side must be faithful even when the Israeli security forces commit the worst atrocities against them.

The forgotten human right

THIS YEAR has already witnessed an unprecedented increase in heating-related deaths due basically to negligence. Barely two months into the new year, the death toll of heating, related fires or asphyxiation reached 18 men, women and children. The concerned authorities have also reported no less than 37 other cases involving near-death situations. How many more similar incidents have taken place but went unreported, we have no way of knowing.

To put the blame solely on the public is unfair since this would be an oversimplification of the problem. It so happens that all the victims of such accidents are poverty stricken. During the cold months of the year, these people need heating just as much as the middle and upper-class people of the country. The less fortunate among us thus try to stay warm in the best way they know how and can afford.

The authorities have indeed sounded the alarm about the phenomenon but have not presented the affected people with a viable alternative that they can afford. To begin with, the government's response has been sporadic at best and has only reacted whenever a situation arose that took the lives of persons. There was no systematic campaign at the beginning of the winter season, for example, warning the people about the inherent dangers of improper heating and telling them how to provide heat for their homes safely and cheaply.

The poor need and deserve not only warnings about dangerous heating methods but also advice on how to go about coping with freezing temperatures. Heating in winter is a human right that calls for more than a haphazard reaction from the central government. The state is dutybound to show the way for efficient and cheap heating by developing suitable methods to be followed by citizens. The Royal Scientific Society (RSS) has taken several initiatives to provide local technologies for domestic purposes among which are solar and wind energies. But the RSS is called upon to go one step further by attempting to develop low-cost heating technology that unprivileged Jordanians and guest workers can apply. To cry wolf every time Jordanians or foreign labourers die from suffocation due to improper use of heating methods is not sufficient. More has to be done in order to be ready and able to save lives next year and beyond.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily commented Sunday on the outcome of meetings held in Amman between the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Jordanian leaders, noting that King Hussein has stressed, to the U.S. administration, Jordan's keenness on pursuing the peace process once the expellees' problem has been settled. The paper said that Jordan is keen on resuming the peace talks because it is keen on ending aggression and helping the Palestinians regain their land and their freedom. However, the paper pointed out that Israel's present policies and its rejection to repatriate the 416 Palestinians now stranded in southern Lebanon do not help the cause of peace and do not encourage the Arab parties to resume the talks. The only way to abort Israel's practices and end its intransigence is a world community decision forcing the Jewish state to accept the international legitimacy and implement U.N. resolution, the paper said. King Hussein was careful to remind the United States of its principles and values which, he said, should be put into practice and applied everywhere in the world, the paper said. It said that the King was careful to remind Washington that only the United States, which has been backing Israel at all levels, can force it to succumb to the world community's will. Jordan, said the paper, believes that the aspired peace would not be the fruit of the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations alone but that which involves the U.S. administration in the peace-making process.

Al Dastour daily dwelt also on the full partnership of the U.S. administration in the peace-making process. At the joint press conference held Saturday, King Hussein underlined the importance of Washington's role in the process, expressing hope that the U.S. administration would do all in its power to ensure the success of the peace process so that the region can enjoy security and stability. The paper said that Washington's readiness to play the role of full partner in the peace process was a welcome development especially as the pledge from Washington coincided with Mr. Christopher's tour of the region. But while welcoming the move, Jordan is keen to warn the various parties against resuming the peace negotiations without removing all the obstacles that impede peace, the paper said. It said that repression in the occupied Arab lands should end, the expellees should be repatriated and the legitimate rights of the Palestinians should be recognised so that the road to peace can be smooth. The paper said that Jordan is willing to resume the peace process but it requires an opportune climate for such as process to succeed and to fulfil the aspirations of the peoples of the region.

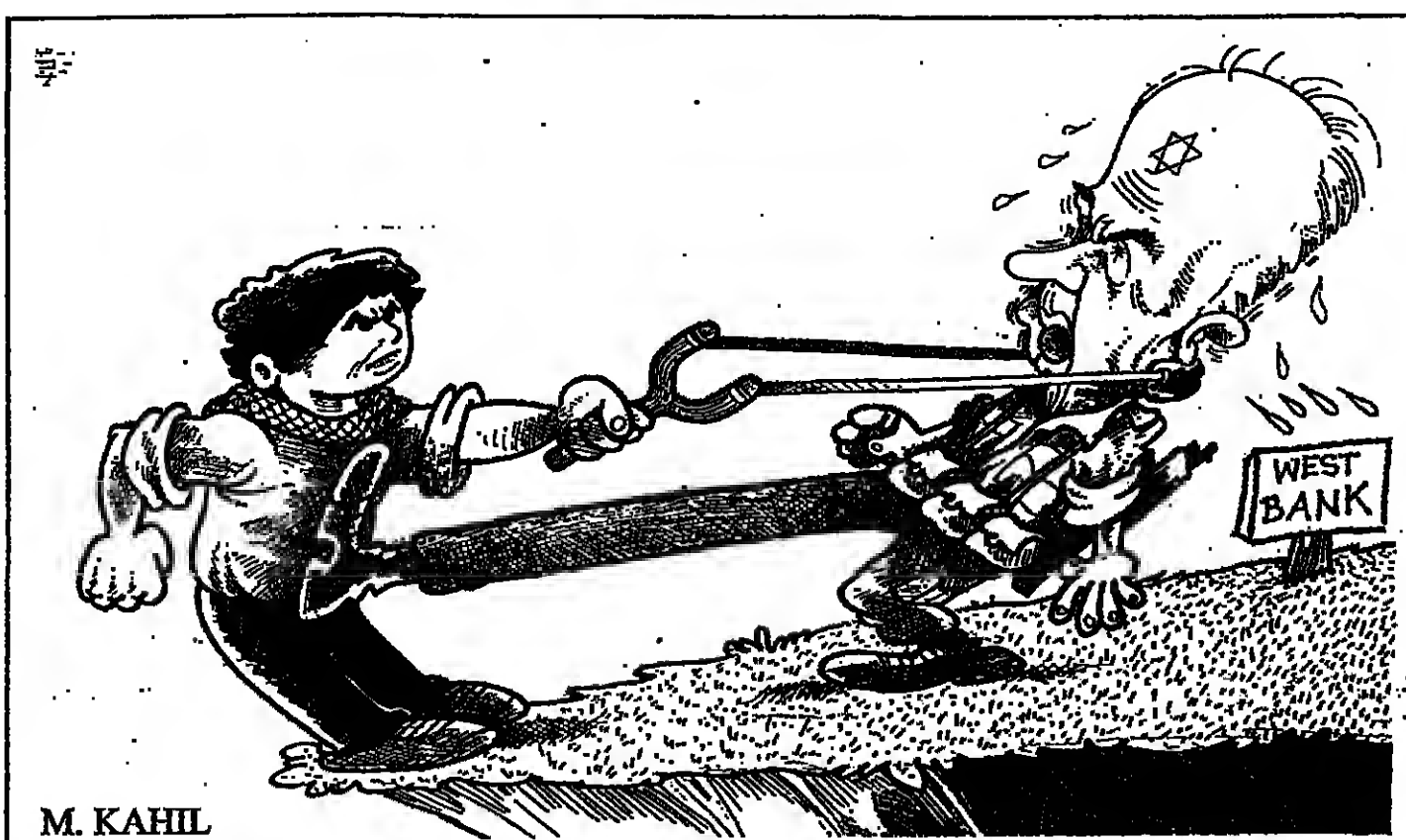
Israel has undertaken the biggest collective expulsion since 1967, of scientists, professors and students, largely as a test case for the new American administration and the new secretary of state, whose appointment was anathema to Zionist lobby groups such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which had been "walking the corridors of the Congress to stop a Christopher appointment." Unfortunately, it seems that the secretary of state has paid a heavy price for gaining the trust of the overly demanding lobby, not only by contravening the Geneva Convention, which prohibits deportation for any reason, but also the spirit of his president's commitment to "renew America," "revitalise democracy" and reform American politics "so that power and privilege no longer shout down the voice of the people."

The American-Israeli deal, concocted behind the back of the Security Council, has in fact not only upheld Israel's war crime, but has discredited the U.S. self-appointed role of leading the world, a role which necessarily needs great leaders committed to noble ideals, not politicians who undermine the basic principles of human rights for political expediency, and acquiescence to the privileged who, indeed, shout down the voice of the people. For I am sure that the American people, who promoted the idea of a people's right to self-determination, civil disobedience against oppressors and equality and freedom, would not endorse such a deal.

With the new U.S. secretary of state's arrival in the region, we can anticipate the message he will bring from Washington. Like his predecessor, James Baker, he will be likely to inform the Palestinian negotiators that if they fail to attend the next round of negotiations they will be the losers. Whether the message underlies a threat or constitutes advice, only time will tell.

But the fact is that without the Palestinians' joining the peace process there would have been no Madrid. They have participated in the negotiations after accepting the imposition of Israel's conditions: surrendering international legitimacy as represented by U.N. resolutions 181 and 194, which respectively prescribe the establishment of a Palestinian state and the return of the refugees expelled by Israel; acquiescence in the cancellation of a direct role for the legitimate representative of the Palestinians — the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO); postponing the question of Jerusalem, the key to any peace; deferring the question of settlement and colonisation of their homeland — the ground on which peace will be realised; and even accepting Israel's anomalous condition of approving the names of the Palestinian delegation, an unprecedented condition in the history of any negotiations.

The Palestinian people welcomed the peace process by presenting olive branches to Israeli soldiers who reciprocated by shooting and killing children during the celebrations. Some Arab and Palestinian leaders welcomed Rabin's election, trusting he had forsaken his historical role of being the "mass expeller" of Lydda and Ramleh in 1948 and the breaker of the bones of



Palestinian children, to the forlorn hope for a peaceful option. But now, all the illusions included in his election campaign, of peace in nine months, have been shattered by the reawakening of "mass expeller" Rabin.

The mass expulsion of December, 1992 has really stalled the peace process. Not because of the criminality of dumping 400 Palestinians into the freezing hills of southern Lebanon, or because of the infringement on the sovereignty of another state — a partner in the peace process — but because of what it reaffirms. As inhuman and callous as the mass expulsion is, it is only a manifestation of what Israel wants out of the negotiations: the affirmation of its continued hegemony over the Palestinian people. Israel is trying to unequivocally assert its real nature of its vision for the solution of the "Palestinian problem": the granting of legitimacy by the international community and the Palestinian people to Israeli sovereignty over the occupied territories, including its right to expel any number of the "stateless minority." For the Israeli prescription of the Civil Administration's autonomy is a colonial prescription without the "advantage" to the indigenous people of having the protection of citizenship in the colonial state. This was confirmed by the recent High Court decision on deportation which capitulated to Rabin's assertion that he will retain the "right" to use deportation in the future. Sadly, the U.S.-Israel "deal," which circumvented U.N. Resolution 799, and which failed to address the illegality of deportation, was considered a victory for Israel's interpretation that the U.S. administration's complicity effectively confirmed Israel's right to deport Palestinians.

This recent mass expulsion was the straw which broke the camel's back. It further undermined the credibility of the negotiations and the sponsors. Further, it defies the U.S. commitment that, "The U.S. is opposed to the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem and the extension of Israeli law on it and the extension of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries. We encourage all sides to

avoid unilateral acts that would exacerbate local tensions or make negotiations more difficult or preempt their final outcome."

Israel's defiance is underwritten and financed by the American taxpayer, and its unilateral systematic Judaisation of the occupied territories indeed "make negotiations more difficult or preempt their final outcome."

The proposition that the Palestinians should negotiate or "lose" is disingenuous in the extreme, for as the following evidence clarifies, the Palestinians are indeed already losing they are losing — their lives, their land, and their future.

Over 1,170 Palestinians have been killed by Israelis since the intifada began. Since Rabin came to power, close to 100 people have been killed and many more maimed and wounded. Ten children under the age of sixteen have been killed since the beginning of December, a 180 per cent increase, and over 300 have been killed since the outbreak of the intifada. Summary executions by Israeli undercover units have increased markedly, accounting for at least 50 deaths in the last year, and new Israeli forces are using anti-tank missiles to destroy Palestinian homes.

Rabin has allowed settlement to continue in all areas under occupation. New housing starts are reported close to Ramallah and Hebron, and Israeli government statistics reveal that over twelve thousand units will be completed in the "Greater Jerusalem" area alone, in the near future, in an acceleration of Israel's relentless Judaisation of the city.

All the above evidence serves to underline the level of "control" which Israel is able to exert over the Palestinian population with impunity. Whilst Israel claims that these actions are a response to the resistance of the Palestinians, in fact, Israel's "insecurity" stems only from its occupation. Even Hamas spokesmen have said that an end to resistance activity will follow an end to the occupation. This is the reality which U.S. diplomacy should be seeking to address, not piecemeal "deals" which undermine the real search for

legitimate peace.

At present, the U.S. position of protecting Israel and failing to adopt a consistent legal standard facilitates, if not supports, the continuation of the vicious circle of violence which, ultimately, can only lead to even more callous Israeli acts of violence and repression. Today, under the pretext of "necessary force," Israel expels over 400 and continues to take land, demolish houses and kill and maim young Palestinian children. Yet, if Israel's occupation continues, then so will the resistance to it. What will then be Israel's response? Logically, it can only be even more violent, otherwise the twisted logic of the deterrence of force is meaningless. Thus, tomorrow we may see the expulsion of thousands, the demolition of entire villages and the shooting dead of countless numbers who resist. If the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are not met, and if Israel continues to act not only with impunity but with compliance and support from the U.S., what other direction can the conflict take? A new holocaust perpetrated by the victims of the last?

Nobody on the Palestinian side wishes the conflict to reach this point. They have participated in good faith in the negotiations in the hope of securing a peaceful future for the Palestinian people. But it is becoming increasingly clear that the proposals which the Palestinians are being asked to consider are nothing more than occupation and subjugation under different legitimising names. Losers as they may be, they will never grant Israel the "legitimacy" to continue occupying Palestinian land and implementing the Zionist solution of mass transfer.

The U.S. could impose, by its partiality and its indifference to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, a political settlement. But, it is vital to remember that the centre of the conflict and the core of the Middle East problem was and still is the Palestinian problem. The question was never anything but the Palestinian question. And the question is not the myth of "all-or-nothing." For, since 1948, though the Palestinians vocally rejected

rian peace initiative, promoting a two-state solution, worked-out after strenuous discussion in the Palestinian National Council in 1974.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher must be asked to clarify just what the U.S. vision of peace is. Does the U.S. administration truly envisage a continuation of Israeli occupation under the guise of a civil administration and thus a continuation of violence and conflict? It must be made clear to all concerned that, in the final analysis, a failure to address the legitimate needs of all parties will mean that all sides will be the losers. Unending violence will ultimately affect all communities in the region, for no Arab will ever accept Israel's continued subjugation of the Palestinian people, and the occupation of Palestinian land.

If the Palestinians are indeed since more the "losers," it will not be due to their failure to attend the next round of negotiations. The U.S. cannot blame the Palestinians for rejecting the granting of legitimacy to their continued subjugation, or for legitimately demanding the implementation of a Security Council resolution. Rather, it will be due to the failure of the U.S. government to ensure the negotiations are based on the original assurances and guarantees given before Madrid; it will be because of the U.S. failure to adhere to international rather than political expediency, its failure to abide by the legislation of its own Congress and cease supporting a country which violates human rights and its failure to support the will of the international community, as embodied in the Security Council, to ensure the immediate return of the deportees.

The new secretary of state should be told: "Yes, the Palestinians may be the losers, but, in that case the Palestinians will never grant legitimacy to Israel and its occupation and the chance for peace will be lost."

The writer is director of the Amman-based Jerusalem Centre for Development Studies.

LETTERS

Oil and vinegar?

To the Editor:

On behalf of the seventh graders section "A", of the National Orthodox School, I would like to present a comment on the proposed amendment of the Judiciary Committee of the Lower House of Parliament that involves the prohibition of mixed trips organised by schools.

Being in a mixed school, my fellow students and I are always interacting with each other. We play and study together, talk to each other, etc. So, we end up being brothers and sisters, friends and colleagues, nothing more than that.

We have shared many experiences together. We know each other well and we like each other within the concept of brotherhood.

My classmates and I do not see any reason for such a decision. So please take into consideration our point of view.

Ednan Abdel Malek,
Seventh Class "A",
National Orthodox School,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Jordan made its stand clear — Abu Jaber

(Continued from page 1)

tion of the exile terms of the... The U.S. secretary of state said the agreement would lead to reviewing the individual cases of the expellees without review applications from them.

A senior U.S. official travelling with Mr. Christopher was Friday quoted as saying that the U.S. would work to get Israel speed up the judicial review process of the expellees but Israeli officials have declined comment on the U.S. suggestion.

Dr. Abu Jaber said Mr. Christopher called for finding means to

overcome obstacles to the peace process so that concentration could be given to the negotiations, saying the U.S. was committed to the principles upon which the peace talks were launched and to which all parties had agreed.

Mr. Christopher said the U.S. had no intention to encroach on the territorial integrity of Iraq, pointing out that it does not view the conflict with Iraq as a personal conflict, Dr. Abu Jaber said.

Mr. Christopher said the U.S. "has no conflict with the Iraqi people," but emphasised the

U.S. commitment to the implementation of all U.N. Security Council resolutions on the Gulf war, according to Dr. Abu Jaber.

Jordan also warned of the danger inherent in the spread of nuclear weapons, and pointed to the necessity that Israel sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Dr. Abu Jaber said.

Pointing out that he held talks with Palestinian and Syrian officials ahead of Mr. Christopher's visit to the Kingdom, Dr. Abu Jaber said he "hoped" the Syrian and Palestinian positions during the visit of Mr. Christopher to the region would be similar to the Jordanian stand, especially on the need to find an acceptable solution to the evictees problem.

U.S. pledges 'honest broker' role

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Christopher also said he discussed U.S. ties with Syria but he declined to give details.

Western diplomats expected him to raise the issue of Syria's tiny Jewish community, which was allowed to immigrate for much of last year until Syria stopped granting exit visas.

The continued presence in Damascus of organisations which Washington says are engaged in "terrorism" was also expected to be discussed as an obstacle to better bilateral ties.

Mr. Christopher, making his first foray into the volatile Middle East since his appointment last month, stressed that it was imperative that the parties return to the negotiations quickly.

Starting afresh, he stressed, "would be undesirable."

After talks with the leaders of Egypt, Jordan and Syria midway through his six-country tour, Mr. Christopher said that many of the officials he has talked to "have spoken of the very adverse effect if we drop the peace process."

Mr. Christopher said that the United States now plans to be a "full partner" in the peace process by "being active, by being concerned, playing the role of honest broker, playing the role of the facilitator... we intend to, if anything, to be more active than we have in the past."

But he noted that in some of the bilateral talks between Israel and the Arabs, "on a number of issues the parties are close enough together they can be assisted by the facilitation of an outsider."

The Syrians and others have been pressing the Americans to take a more direct involvement in the talks.

"The Lebanese displayed by Washington towards the peace process needs practical translation on the ground," Syrians Ali Thawra daily said in an editorial Sunday.

"This cannot be done unless Washington uses its leverage to persuade Israel to reverse its provocative and stubborn attitude," Mr. Christopher gave no timeframe for resuming the peace talks in Washington, but U.S. officials have been talking of April as a target date.

Mr. Sharaa, who met Mr. Christopher earlier in the day, said at their joint news conference that Damascus wants the peace talks resumed, but also insists on the return of the evictees in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 799.

Mr. Christopher noted that he has sought to defuse "the peace process and other issues," and that there was no trade-off on improving the U.S.-Syrian relations against Syrian backing for resuming the peace talks.

Mr. Christopher said that Mr. Assad "certainly did not indicate that it was necessary for us to discuss or analyse other issues in return for their involvement in the peace process. He has an independent desire to move forward on the process."

Mr. Christopher said that during his session with Mr. Assad at the Syrian leader's palace overlooking Damascus he discussed improving Syria's human rights record and its possible removal from the U.S. State Department's list of countries supporting "terrorism."

This has been a major impediment to bolstering Washington-Damascus relations and resuming badly needed economic aid to Syria.

Mr. Christopher declined to discuss those matters and simply said: "We discussed both subjects."

During his talks with Mr. Christopher Mr. Assad affirmed Syria's commitment to peace and

called for solving the expellees crisis, Syrian presidential spokesman Joubran Kourieh said.

"President Assad affirmed Syria's keen interest in (preserving) the peace process and the necessity of removing the obstacles from the way of the process especially the deportees issue," Mr. Kourieh said.

"Agreement was reached to continue contracts between the two parties," he added.

Mr. Kourieh said the talks covered a number of bilateral and regional issues. He gave no details.

After meeting King Fahd in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Mr. Christopher will fly to Kuwait and then to Israel. En route, he may stop over in Lebanon for talks with Lebanese leaders, although the country is not on the official itinerary.

Palestinians said Sunday U.S. pressure on Israel to speed up judicial reviews of the expulsions would not enable them to defy public opinion and resume the peace talks.

They said feelings against the Israeli expulsion of 415 Palestinians to Lebanon were still running too high to allow a return to talks which many Arabs living under Israeli occupation believe have brought them nothing.

A Palestinian opinion poll published by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre on the eve of his visit showed that four out of five Palestinians opposed the resumption of talks until the evictees returned (see separate story).

Mr. Christopher is pressing Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to hasten the review of each evictee's case. This could allow the now 396 men stranded between the Israeli and Lebanese armies in South Lebanon to return home early.

But Palestinian leaders insist Israel comply with Resolution 799 which calls for the immediate return of all the expellees.

"I can confidently say that it will not be possible to accept invitations to peace talks in April if this issue is not solved based on 799," Palestinian delegate Ghassan Ali Khatib told Reuters.

"The quicker the deportees return the quicker the negotiations can resume."

Mr. Christopher has heard the same view from each of the Arab countries which he has visited since Thursday.

"The street is emotional and not pragmatic," said Palestinian commentator Ziad Abu Zayyad. "They sympathise with the deportees on the human level, if not politically."

Many of the expellees are supporters of groups which have been fighting the Palestine Liberation Organisation for backing the U.S.-sponsored peace talks.

"We cannot go against the will of the people," Mr. Khatib said. Palestinian leaders have tempered their already flagging enthusiasm for the talks to suit the new public mood since December.

Their political embarrassment has been heightened by the Israeli army's iron-fist suppression of protests in the occupied territories. Soldiers have killed nearly 50 Palestinians since Dec. 17.

"As it stands unless there is a big change in human rights conditions I doubt there is a chance for us to go in April," spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi told Reuters.

Israeli officials have said Israel would resist any U.S. pressure to ease conditions in the occupied territories. But ministers said after Sunday's cabinet meeting that gestures such as prisoner releases and the return of some other long-term evictees were being considered.

Garang denies talks planned

(Continued from page 1)

message from (Sudanese head of state Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan) Bashir, that's all."

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who once studied with Col. Garang, visited Sudan last week and diplomats here said he had arranged a meeting in Kampala between Col. Garang and Mr. Mohammed to end 10 years of civil war in southern Sudan.

But Col. Garang, who arrived in Kampala Friday, said the only valid mediation was that by Nigeria, which set up two sets of peace talks between the rival Sudanese groups in Abuja last year. Those peace talks stalled in November.

"If the military junta (in Khartoum) wants fresh peace talks they should first tell (Nigerian President Ibrahim) Babangida that his efforts have failed and they want a new mediator," Col. Garang said.

Khartoum has accused Col. Garang of delaying a resumption of the peace talks by refusing to receive a message from Gen. Bashir. Col. Garang in turn has blamed Khartoum for the delays.

One obstacle to a settlement is the internal divisions within the SPLA. Two groups have broken away, accusing Col. Garang of dictatorship and abuse of human rights.

Col. Garang told Reuters he would not try to talk them back. "They have all been bribed by the junta and are now part of the Sudanese government," he said.

The Khartoum government wants all factions to attend peace talks to hammer out an agreement that would be respected by all the rebels now fighting the Sudanese army.

The SPLA is fighting what it sees as domination of the black African south of Sudan by the Arabised and Muslim north. But the movement has been hard hit by the loss of Ethiopian support in 1991 and by successive government offensives.

Col. Garang's forces, which once held a vast area of southern Sudan, have been driven back to a much smaller strip along Sudan's border with Uganda.

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ATHENS, Greece — As fighting rages in former Yugoslavia, ancient Balkan enemies are trying to reassure one another that they believe war is no way to resolve differences in Europe.

Yugoslavia's southern neighbours have watched with alarm as war in the former communist federation grows bloodier and spreads towards them from Slovenia through Croatia into Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Now many fear the next battlefields could be Serbia's mainly Albanian-populated Kosovo province, and Macedonia, whose declaration of independence from Yugoslavia has been largely ignored.

Should violence flare in those regions, ethnic loyalties could spark conflict with and among neighbouring Albania, Bulgaria and Greece. Then, even would be regional power Turkey might be dragged in.

Leaders of these countries have been shutting from capital to capital in recent weeks with messages of peace.

The main topics of discussion are the possibility of foreign military intervention to end Bosnia's war, the recognition of Macedonia, and the status of Kosovo — all thorny issues that could rekindle ancient hatreds and nationalism.

Despite their minority status in Kosovo, Serbs regard it as the heart of their medieval kingdom and vow never to give it up. Serbian police control the province, sometimes clashing with ethnic Albanians. Many observers fear that if the war ends in Bosnia, Serb irregulars will continue their nationalist campaigns in Kosovo, Macedonia, surrounded by Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Albania, is a traditional flash point and has a large ethnic Albanian minority.

In the last few days, Turkey's President Turgut Ozal has toured Bulgaria and Macedonia and is due to Albania and Croatia. Bulgaria's president Zhelyu Zhelev has visited Albania and Macedonia.

Greece's foreign minister completed an economic cooperation accord with Romania. Germany has asked Greece to use its influence with Serbia to help halt Bosnian bloodshed.

"This is an exchange of information and reassurances which are very useful at this stage," said Kamal Shaheed of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

While Mr. Shaheed acknowledged the dangers of a broader Balkan conflict, he said he thought it unlikely.

"I don't see Albania moving into war over Kosovo, nor Greece being dragged into a war from which it has nothing to gain," he said.

Yet two axes, currently consisting of one north-south, allying eastern Orthodox Serbia,

Old enemies try to reassure each other

By Nikos Koundararas

The Associated Press

Romania and Greece, the other east-west, running through Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania.

Turkey, a secular country whose population nevertheless is overwhelmingly Muslim, is outraged at what it sees as world failure to aid Bosnia's Muslims.

It has rallied other Islamic nations to the Bosnian cause and supports military intervention to help Bosnia's Muslim government beat back Serbian fighters who have overrun 70 per cent of Bosnia.

Romania and Greece — Turkey's arch rival and fellow NATO member — oppose foreign intervention.

During his visit to Sofia, Mr. Ozal again said Turkey would supply troops to an international intervention force in Bosnia, but only at U.N. request.

If peaceful methods were fruitless, "the United Nations should give the aggressor a lesson as happened in Kuwait," he said,

warning that: "If the tragedy is not stopped, the Balkans will probably have to face much more serious problems."

Mr. Ozal's host, Bulgarian President Zhelyu Zhelev, said that the recent diplomacy amounts to an appeal to the world to stop the "shameful conflict" in Bosnia. He said building alliances in the Balkans was useless.

Alliances certainly did not resolve territorial disputes and ethnic hatreds during the first two Balkan wars, in 1912 and 1913.

Greeks, Bulgars, Serbs, Montenegrins and Albanians all fought to push the Turks out of the Balkans as 500 years of Ottoman domination collapsed.

But then sub-alliances formed and turned on each other to decide who should control Macedonia, and the territory that became Albania.

There are still those who believe the lessons of a bloody history that gave the Balkans its nickname of "the powder keg of

Europe" have been learned. Thanos Veremis, director of the Hellenic Foundation for Defence and Foreign Policy, a private think tank in Athens, said Turkey is striving to gain influence in the region, especially given most Balkan countries also have Muslim minorities or even majorities.

"I think Turkey's programme is to gain influence in the Balkans without war," he said.

Yet Turkey's recognition of Macedonia is a thorn in the side of the Greeks. Greece fears an independent Macedonia would make territorial claims on a northern Greek province of the same name, and demands the region adopt a new name if it leaves Yugoslavia. Greece has kept the European Community from recognising Macedonia's independence.

And Serbian loathing for the Turks, their former imperial masters, still runs deep.

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(The British Curriculum School in Amman)

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Bosnian Serb forces free blockaded U.N. aid convoy

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Serb forces Sunday freed a U.N. aid convoy trapped at a roadblock in eastern Bosnia and let it head for the besieged Muslim town of Zepa, U.N. peacekeepers said.

But the U.N. aid agency said it was still not able to resume deliveries of food to the civilian population of Sarajevo despite an assurance by Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic that his government was ending a boycott of relief supplies.

The convoy of 10 trucks, loaded with food and medicine, began inching down a winding 12 kilometre mountain road under threat from land mines concealed by fresh snow.

It entered Bosnia Monday, trying to reach either Gorazde or Zepa in a mission frustrated by political manoeuvring between rival Muslim and Serb leaders bidding for the sympathy of the outside world.

Tony Land, an official of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Sarajevo, said Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic promised Saturday that an order to let the trucks pass would reach the Serbs at the roadblock.

Land added that city authorities in the Bosnian capital had not authorised the distribution of U.N. aid to the civilian population of 380,000 people who have been trapped since the civil war began 10 months ago.

"We have not been delivering aid into the city," he said. "Right now I am waiting for the city council to make a decision...as of yesterday, the mayor was not available."

Mr. Izetbegovic announced Saturday that the boycott was over after fulfilling its purpose of

drawing attention to the plight of up to 100,000 Muslims starving in eastern Bosnia behind a Serb blockade.

Muslim spokesmen have claimed hundreds of deaths from starvation in towns in the region, some of which have received no outside help since winter began. The toll has not been independently verified.

Bosnian Serbs have refused to let some convoys pass because they say the food strengthens Muslim fighting capability and also because of continuing battles for territory in the east.

The Sarajevo boycott and the Serb blockade of the convoys prompted the UNHCR to suspend aid deliveries last week until U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali ordered their resumption.

U.N. peacekeepers in Sarajevo reacted coolly to a plan by U.S. President Bill Clinton to parachute supplies to eastern Bosnia although it was welcomed by the UNHCR.

Commander Bary Frewer, spokesman for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) which provides armed escorts for the convoys, said: "We are unenthusiastic about this idea." He suggested persevering with ground missions.

But Commander Land said: "I'd welcome anything that would give food to hungry people."

Since Sarajevo authorities stopped distributing emergency supplies last week, more than 1,000 tonnes of food have piled up at the Tarnac of Sarajevo Airport and another 1,000 tonnes sit in warehouses in the Bosnian capital.

Mr. Izetbegovic Saturday also announced a unilateral ceasefire by Muslim forces in the war

which started when Bosnian Serbs resisted independence from Yugoslavia declared by Muslims and Croats.

The Bosnian leader said his troops would fire only if attacked first.

Muslim-controlled Sarajevo Radio reported the freezing city was quiet overnight despite what it described as Serb provocations.

According to the radio, Serb fighters shelled the northern Muslim towns of Gradacac and Maglaj.

The Bosnian Serb News Agency (SRNA) said Muslim forces were still attacking the Serb town of Doboi in northern Bosnia with mortars, despite the ceasefire.

In Croatia, Zagreb Radio said Serb gunners attacked Croatian settlements in the Adriatic coast region which has been volatile since fighting resumed between the two sides last month.

A humanitarian aid convoy of 59 trucks from Strasbourg rested on the Adriatic coast of Croatia Sunday before heading for Sarajevo with or without an armed United Nations escort, organisers said.

The convoy, organised by the French Alsace-Sarajevo Relief Committee, was spending the day at Makarska south of the port of Split prior to beginning the difficult and dangerous leg of the journey to the besieged Bosnian capital.

Meanwhile, a prisoner exchange involving 54 Serbs and 54 Bosnians was completed Sunday in Bosnia after a week of negotiations by French and Red Cross officials, the French government announced.

The office of Humanitarian Action Minister Bernard Kouchner said 27 Serbs from Tarcin, southwest of Sarajevo, and 27

from the central region around Zenica, were freed under the auspices of the French Ambassador to Bosnia, Henry Jacotin. The release took place at Kiseljak, northwest of Sarajevo.

The Bosnian prisoners were freed at a bridge between Sremska Raca in Serbia and Bosanska Raca in eastern Bosnia, the ministry communiqué said.

Mr. Kouchner helped negotiate the exchange during a recent visit to the region. Red Cross, U.N. and European Community representatives also were involved.

In a separate development, police fired tear gas Sunday during a protest by hundreds of Macedonians against the building of houses to settle Muslim refugees from Bosnia's civil war in Skopje.

Clashes began Saturday when protesters hurling stones blocked a motorway through the Macedonian capital before being repulsed by baton charges and tear gas.

Refugee housing is being built under heavy police protection in the Djorje Petrov district of the city.

Journalists said between 500 and 1,000 demonstrators were confronted Sunday by 200 riot police who stopped an attempt to block the site.

Macedonia, the poorest of the former Yugoslav republics which became independent last year, has received more than 50,000 of the Muslims made homeless by the fighting in Bosnia.

The Movement for All-Macedonian Action (MAAK) said the government's plan to house the refugees was "a policy of further Islamisation of Macedonia."



RUSSIAN MILITARY REFORMS: Two unidentified Russian army officers discuss reforms during a break in the second day of the all Russian army officers meeting in Moscow on Feb.

21. The talks dealt with the implementation of the military reforms and the level of combat preparedness of the Russian army (AFP photo)

497 trapped on drifting North Sea platform

LONDON (Agencies) — Nearly 500 workers were trapped aboard a floating accommodation platform which had cut its anchors and was battered by storms in the North Sea Sunday, rescue services said.

A Royal Air Force (RAF) spokesman said a plan to use helicopters to lift the 497 workers off the vessel, a floating hotel for workers constructing a gas rig, was postponed because of the weather.

A spokesman for the U.S. oil company Amoco, which is building the rig, said no-one had been injured and there was no immediate danger as the platform was holding its position under its own limited power.

The platform cut its anchors overnight when high seas threatened to smash it against the rig Lomond, which is under construction 120 miles east of Aberdeen. It was now "holding its station" less than a mile downwind of the rig.

Several support vessels were

being sent to the area and an RAF Sea King rescue helicopter and an RAF Nimrod had flown over the scene to assess it.

A fleet of eight Super Puma helicopters was assembled at Aberdeen but the rescue operation started to bring about 400 non-essential personnel off the rig was postponed because of high winds.

The Amoco spokesman said the workers would have to be taken off and then the platform would be towed to Norway to have its anchors refitted.

The Amoco spokesman said gas wells had been drilled beneath the Lomond, but they had been completed and there was "no hazard from that aspect."

Ship sinks in North Sea

Meanwhile one ship sank and another was adrift off the Dutch coast Sunday as storm force winds whipped the North Sea, a Coast Guard official said. No lives were lost.

Coast Guard spokesman Gerrit Miedema said the Swedish flagged freighter North Queen capsized and sank in heavy seas near the small island of Schiermonnikoog.

Three lifeboats from the Dutch and German rescue services were on the spot before the leaking grain carrier overturned and the nine-man crew were winched to safety by a German naval helicopter, Mr. Miedema said.

A second vessel, the German registered Linda Buck, was adrift northwest of the Dutch island of Terschelling after a freak wave smashed into the bridge and its electricity supply cut out, Mr. Miedema said.

Prevailing winds were carrying the ship away from the shore, and two life boats and a helicopter were standing by, he said. The six-man crew was in no immediate danger.

Mr. Miedema said rescue services would wait until the storm abated before trying to tow the Linda Buck to the nearest port.

ANC accuses De Klerk of playing games

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The ANC Sunday scoffed at President F.W. de Klerk's appointment of the first non-white cabinet ministers, saying it reeked of tokenism and did nothing to further black-white relations.

"The fact that they begin duties on April Fool's Day speaks for itself," the black group said in its first official response to Saturday night's cabinet changes.

Mr. De Klerk, seeking to attract new supporters to his National Party in advance of multi-racial elections, named an Indian and two mixed-race men to cabinet posts, making them the first non-whites to hold portfolios. But they were given low profile positions, and Mr. De Klerk did not appoint a black cabinet minister.

Albie Williams, a member of parliament's Mixed Race Chamber, was named minister of sport; Jac Rabie, another mixed race politician, was appointed minister of population development, and Indian lawyer Badera Ranchod was named minister of tourism.

None is known as an anti-apartheid activist, and all have been criticised within their ethnic groups in the past for working with the white-led government.

Calling the three "discredited and discarded," the ANC said Mr. De Klerk's move was an "empty gesture" that demonstrated the need for multi-racial elections to choose a new government.

"Reconciliation means all the people of South Africa electing a government of their choice, drawn from all the people of this country. It does not mean De Klerk playing tokenist population games," the nation's most powerful black group said.

Indian college students burned Mr. Ranchod in effigy in 1986 when he became South Africa's first non-white ambassador, to the European Community in Brussels.

Anti-apartheid activists assailed Mr. Rabie and Mr. Williams for joining parliament in 1984, when separate chambers were created for Indians and people of mixed race. The chambers are far weaker than the white chamber, and the black majority was ignored.

Their participation in the segregated parliament made them part of the apartheid system, the ANC and other groups charged.

Despite the angry response from the ANC, the appointments were not likely to affect the progress of ANC-government talks on political reform. Both sides are closer than ever on their plans for an interim government to oversee the transition to multi-racial democracy, and negotiations to work out final details are expected to resume next month.

U.N. reports fresh fighting in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (R) — United Nations peacekeepers have reported fresh fighting between Phnom Penh government troops and Khmer Rouge guerrillas in Cambodia's central Kompong Thom province, a senior military official said Sunday.

"There's definitely fighting going on between CPAF (Phnom Penh army) and NADK (Khmer Rouge) just north of Stung," the U.N. military official told Reuters.

The NADK is the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea, CPAF is the Cambodian People's Armed Forces.

He said the fighting broke out Thursday and was centred about two kilometres north of town.

Stung, a small town straddling strategic Route 6 linking central Kompong Thom and Siem Reap in the northwest, lies about 170 kilometres northwest of Phnom Penh.

The sudden outbreak of hostilities has caused some Cambodians to evacuate the area, the official said.

"Some locals are getting out. They believe it (Stung) will be attacked," he said.

The official, who asked not to be named, said the Khmer Rouge had fired several 107mm rockets that landed within 500 metres of an Indonesian parachute camp in the town.

The Khmer Rouge strength was estimated at about 30-40 guerrilla fighters, he said. Their weapons include a wheeled 107mm Chinese-made rocket launcher.

No injuries have been reported among any of the personnel stationed there as part of the 22,000-strong U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

UNTAC was set up after a peace agreement was signed in Paris in 1991 by all four rival Cambodian political factions, in-

cluding the Khmer Rouge.

The Khmer Rouge refuses to cooperate with UNTAC or implement the terms of the Paris pact.

In nearby Popok Hamlet, Khmer Rouge guerrillas detained a U.S. military observer for two hours Saturday before setting him free, the official said.

Central Kompong Thom province has been the site of more ceasefire violations than any other part of Cambodia.

The Phnom Penh army controls the main roads in the province, which are frequently cut by marauding bands of Khmer Rouge guerrillas whose supply lines cross Route 6.

The guerrillas' local 616 Division is headquartered at Sakrean, a small town in the north-central part of the province.

U.N. security for the province is entrusted to a battalion of Indonesian paratroopers.

Angola talks 'may resume next week'

LONDON (R) — United Nations observers in Angola say a second round of peace talks between the government and UNITA rebels could take place in Addis Ababa next week.

Angolan National Radio reported Sunday.

The report, picked up by the British Broadcasting Corp. monitoring service, said sources in the U.N. Angola Verification Mission-2 (UNAVEM 2) believed a meeting could be staged in the Ethiopian capital toward the middle of next week.

Margaret Anstee, the U.N.'s special representative in Angola, met Angolan Foreign Minister Venancio De Moura Saturday, and was assured that the government side is ready to attend.

UNITA declined to suggest to Ms. Anstee a date by the Friday deadline set by Portugal, Russia and the United States who are observing peace accords signed in 1991, but did insist that it wanted to resume dialogue with the gov-

ernment to end their escalating civil war.

Senior officials of the three observer countries are due to meet in Lisbon Tuesday to discuss the peace accords, which briefly ended 16 years of civil war.

Fighting has resumed with unprecedented intensity since UNTA leader Jonas Savimbi rejected his September electoral defeat and began expelling local authorities from some 75 per cent of the country.

A first round of peace talks between UNITA and the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) government in late January in Addis Ababa failed to produce a ceasefire.

The war has displaced hundreds of thousands of people and turned several cities into virtual ghost towns.

The worst fighting has been in Huambo, once the second city and headquarters of UNITA

(National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), where at least 10,000 civilians have died in six weeks.

The armed forces said the situation was "very worrying" after particularly heavy shelling Friday.

The World Food Programme said about 100,000 people had fled the city. Destruction in the entire country was threatening three million people — nearly one-third of the population — with hunger and disease.

UNITA has rejected a brief truce to allow humanitarian aid into Huambo.

Many senior UNITA figures have rejected Mr. Savimbi's belated drift and 10 this week took their seats in parliament in defiance.

They joined a unanimous call in parliament Friday for an unconditional ceasefire and threat of legal action against UNITA's leadership.

North Korea says attempts to force nuclear inspection could bring war

TOKYO (AP) — Communist North Korea, suspected in the West of trying to develop nuclear arms, declared Sunday that any attempt to force it to accept a special U.N. inspection could lead to war in Korea.

The U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) made the request for a special inspection after its inspectors were denied access early this month to two buildings at Yong-dyon, site of the North's nuclear complex. North Korea contends the buildings are unrelated military facilities that it is not obligated to show to IAEA inspectors.

"Should any 'special inspection' or 'sanctions' be imposed on us and our inviolable land violated by great powers, it would become a dangerous train plunging the whole territory, both the North and the South, into the scourge of war," the official

Workers (Communist) Party newspaper Rodong Shinmun declared.

Its commentary, broadcast in part by the North's official Korean Central News Agency, was monitored in Tokyo.

The paper said great powers were trying to use the U.N. Security Council to force the special inspection on North Korea "as part of their moves to isolate and stamp out (North Korea), the bastion of socialism."

It added: "The United States cannot be justified in trying to force an unreasonable 'special inspection' on our republic, a non-nuclear state, staging nuclear war exercises like Team Spirit against it. Our people will never allow others to infringe on their national dignity and sovereignty, their life and soul."

In 1992, the United States and South Korea cancelled their annual Team Spirit joint military

exercises to encourage North-South Korean dialogue. Early that year, the two Koreas adopted a reconciliation agreement and a nuclear arms ban pact.

So far, however, North Korea has refused to permit the international nuclear inspections required under the arms ban agreement.

The North says its nuclear programme is solely peaceful.

Also Sunday, its official news agency broadcast a response by the North's Ministry of Atomic Energy Industry to the special inspection request.

It said that what the IAEA called an inconsistency was "a mistake coming from a hasty interpretation of the results of inspection not taking into detailed consideration the characteristic features of our facilities, operation conditions and nuclear activities."

Philippine aide offers to quit in police purge

MANILA (AP) — The cabinet member who supervises the Philippine National Police resigned Sunday to give President Fidel Ramos a free hand to reorganise the scandal ridden force he himself once commanded.

But Gen. Ramos refused to say whether he would accept the resignation of Interior Secretary Rafael Alunan, who served as the spokesman of the Ramos election campaign last year.

Last Thursday, Gen. Ramos called on 200 police officers from the ranks of colonel and above to resign following allegations of widespread corruption and ineptness within the 100,000 member force.

Mr. Alunan told reporters he supported the call as a "dramatic step in the right direction."

"However, it would not be complete if those who supervise (the police) itself are excluded," Mr. Alunan said.

Mr. Alunan's department supervises the police and he serves as chairman of the National Police Commission, a group that oversees the force.

"The people want to live in complete safety and security and demand that the government undertake all the appropriate and necessary actions to help bring this about," Mr. Alunan said.

In Zamboanga, Gen. Ramos told reporters his call for resignations in police ranks did not apply to Mr. Alunan.

Gen. Ramos also said he accepted the resignation Sunday of former Police National Chief Cesar Nazareno, who was relieved last September but still kept on the rolls because of civil service tenure.

"The status of cabinet members is different from the status of members of the Philippine National Police," Gen. Ramos said without elaborating.

Public outrage over the police has mounted, first with a wave of car thefts two years ago and later with more than 100 kidnappings, mostly of Chinese Filipinos.

Japanese, Taiwanese and Malaysian business leaders have told Filipino officials that law and order is one of the major factors discouraging foreign investment in the Philippines, whose economy has been stagnant for two years.

Gen. Ramos commanded the forerunner of the National Police, the Philippine Constabulary, for 17 years. The Constabulary was reorganised into the Philippine National Police in 1990 to remove it from the military establishment.

But the change did little to reduce the corruption and ineffectiveness that permeate the ranks. Police have been implicated in crimes ranging from petty shakedowns and extortion to murder and kidnapping.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

2 U.K. 10-year-olds charged with murder

LIVERPOOL (AP) — Police Saturday charged two 10-year-old boys with the abduction and murder of a toddler, a crime that stunned Britain and terrified parents. The youngsters also have been charged with attempted abduction. Press Association, the British National News Agency, said the charge was connected with an attempt to kidnap another toddler shortly before 2-year-old James Bulger disappeared from a shopping mall on Feb. 12. His battered body was found on a rail track two days later. "The family are of course relieved at the progress that has been made but are still trying to come to terms with the situation," said Sean Sexton, a lawyer representing James' parents, Ralph and Denise. Experts believe the boys are the youngest children to be charged with murder in Britain, at least this century.

Nobel laureates end Burma mission

BANGKOK (AP) — Nobel Peace Prize winners campaigning for human rights in Burma Sunday ended their visit here with vows to keep the pressure on Rangoon's military government. The Nobel laureates, denied visas to Burma, used neighbouring Thailand as their platform to demand that the Burmese junta release from detention opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and 1,500 other political prisoners. "We hope that the military government there, which is afraid of a little woman, is made to quake, made to shake in their boots, because our mission is saying the world is watching you: Watch out," said South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu to a university seminar audience. Ms. Suu Kyi, who is in her fourth year of house arrest in Rangoon, was the winner of the 1991 Peace Prize.

IRA carries out gun attack in Belfast

BELFAST (R) — The Irish Republican Army (IRA) said it carried out a gun attack in Belfast city centre Saturday night after three people were wounded within a short distance of each other. In the first shooting one person was wounded. Minutes later two people were injured following a burst of gunfire but it was unclear if the same gunman was responsible. In a statement, the IRA, fighting to end British rule in Northern Ireland, said it carried out the first shooting. They did not mention the second incident, but said a fuller statement would be issued later. Police, combing the area for spent cartridges, said it took them some time to realise that a second shooting had taken place. The injured were taken to hospital, but it was unknown how badly hurt they were. Local people said they believed the latest casualties in the long history of sectarian violence in the province were protestants.

Shultz sought Nancy Reagan's help

WASHINGTON (R) — Former Secretary of State George Shultz tried in 1986 to enlist Nancy Reagan's aid in stopping the sale of arms to Iran but did not realise she wanted to oust him, the Washington Post said. The newspaper said that in November 1986 Mr. Shultz wanted to engineer the removal of President Ronald Reagan's national security adviser, John Poindexter, in a bid to persuade Mr. Reagan to stop selling arms to Iran. But Mr. Shultz was unaware that Nancy Reagan regarded him as disloyal to her husband and wanted him out of office. Unable to achieve his objective, Mr. Shultz thought of resigning. The Washington Post said its report was based on notes written by Mr. Shultz's aide Charles Hill released by the Iran-contra independent counsel last week covering meetings Mr. Shultz had with various officials.

Hijacked plane leaves for Russia

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (AP) — The wife of the man who hijacked a Russian airliner to Stockholm confessed Sunday that she helped him plan the hijack, police reported. The twin-engine Tupolev 134 took off at 12:29 p.m. (11:29 GMT) on its return to St. Petersburg, Russia, its original destination. Police said the plane carried all 44 Russian passengers and seven crew who had been aboard when it landed in Sweden. The couple were expected to appear later Sunday in a Stockholm court, where an order to detain them would be issued. It was not immediately clear whether they would be extradited for trial in Russia or be prosecuted in Sweden. Their names were withheld pending the court hearing. The man, a grenade in each hand, hijacked the plane Saturday to Tallinn in Estonia, where it was refueled, and on to Stockholm. He said he wanted to go to the United States. His wife told passengers she hadn't known about the hijack and was surprised by her husband's actions. With her was their eight-month-old son who, police said, was suffering from a cold. Police said the wife changed her story and confessed to helping in the hijack during questioning in Stockholm.

COLUMN

Stars pay tribute to Al Pacino

NEW YORK (R) — Oscar Nominee Al Pacino, hoping to break his Academy Award losing streak, got a chance to court the voters in a star-filled tribute to the actor. Pacino, famous for his often eruptive roles, is nominated this year as best actor for his portrayal of a blind man in *Scent of a Woman* and Best Supporting Actor for his role of a smooth salesman in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. But he was honoured at the gala Saturday for the depth of his career, which includes such films as the Godfather trilogy, *Serpico* (1973) and *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975). "There is no one who can combine the intensity and power of Al Pacino with his sympathy and vulnerability," *Glengarry* co-star Alec Baldwin told the crowd of 700 at the black-tie dinner at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. While Pacino's films have earned him six previous Academy Award nominations, he has never won the Oscar. This year, he has already won the Golden Globe Award for *Scent of a Woman*. The Golden Globe Awards are often considered a barometer of how the Academy Award voting will run. Among the Hollywood celebrities who came to honour Pacino were co-stars Ellen Barkin and Chris O'Donnell and Hollywood heavy-hitters Christopher Reeve, Lauren Bacall, Spike Lee, director Sidney Lumet and super agent Michael Ovitz.

Pollution controllers lose their hair

MANILA (R) — For air pollution in the southern Philippines, read hair pollution. Of 20 pollution control inspectors monitoring smoke emissions from cars and trucks in Davao City, all found their hairlines suddenly starting to recede, and some went completely bald, the Manila Times said Sunday. It quoted Jose Guadalupe, officer-in-charge of the city's environment office, as saying inspectors from now on would be assigned to air testing for only six months at a time to prevent further hair loss.

British men often violent at home — survey

LONDON (R) — Two out of three British men would react violently if their wives or girlfriends were unfaithful or asked about domestic arrangements, according to a survey on domestic violence. The survey, by the Centre of Criminology at Middlesex University, found that British men lose their famed "stiff upper lip" at home, resorting to frequent violence. Sixty-three per cent of men questioned said they would respond violently if they found out their partners had been unfaithful or in a particularly intense fight about children, money or other domestic arrangements. Almost three out of 10 women surveyed said they had been injured by their partners. Six per cent said they had been forced to have sex in the past year and 2.4 per cent said they had been raped at home. Of those who said their partners had attacked them, 29 per cent had to see a doctor. More than four in 10 had difficulty sleeping or felt depressed. But few women had reported the attacks to police — only one in five, the survey showed. The same proportion went to a doctor and 21 per cent went straight to a lawyer. Project director Jayne Mooney, who interviewed 580 women and 420 men, said the survey had uncovered a "high level of domestic violence."

World's oldest citizen turns 118 in France

ARLES, France (R) — Jeanne Calment, believed to be the world's oldest citizen, was showered with bouquets and telegrams when she turned 118 Sunday in an old people's home in Arles, southern France. Ms. Calment, who knew the painter Vincent Van Gogh in her youth, gave up smoking last year and no longer drinks her daily glass of port. She is deaf but her memory is still vivid. In an interview with France-Info Radio, she said: "The past is very long, so long that it's hard to remember everything." Recalling Van Gogh, who lived in Arles in 1888-89 when he cut off part of his ear and sent it to a woman who had spurned his love, Ms. Calment said: "He was a madman." She also says the literary giant Victor Hugo, who died in Paris in 1885. The Guinness Book of Records lists her as the world's oldest living person.